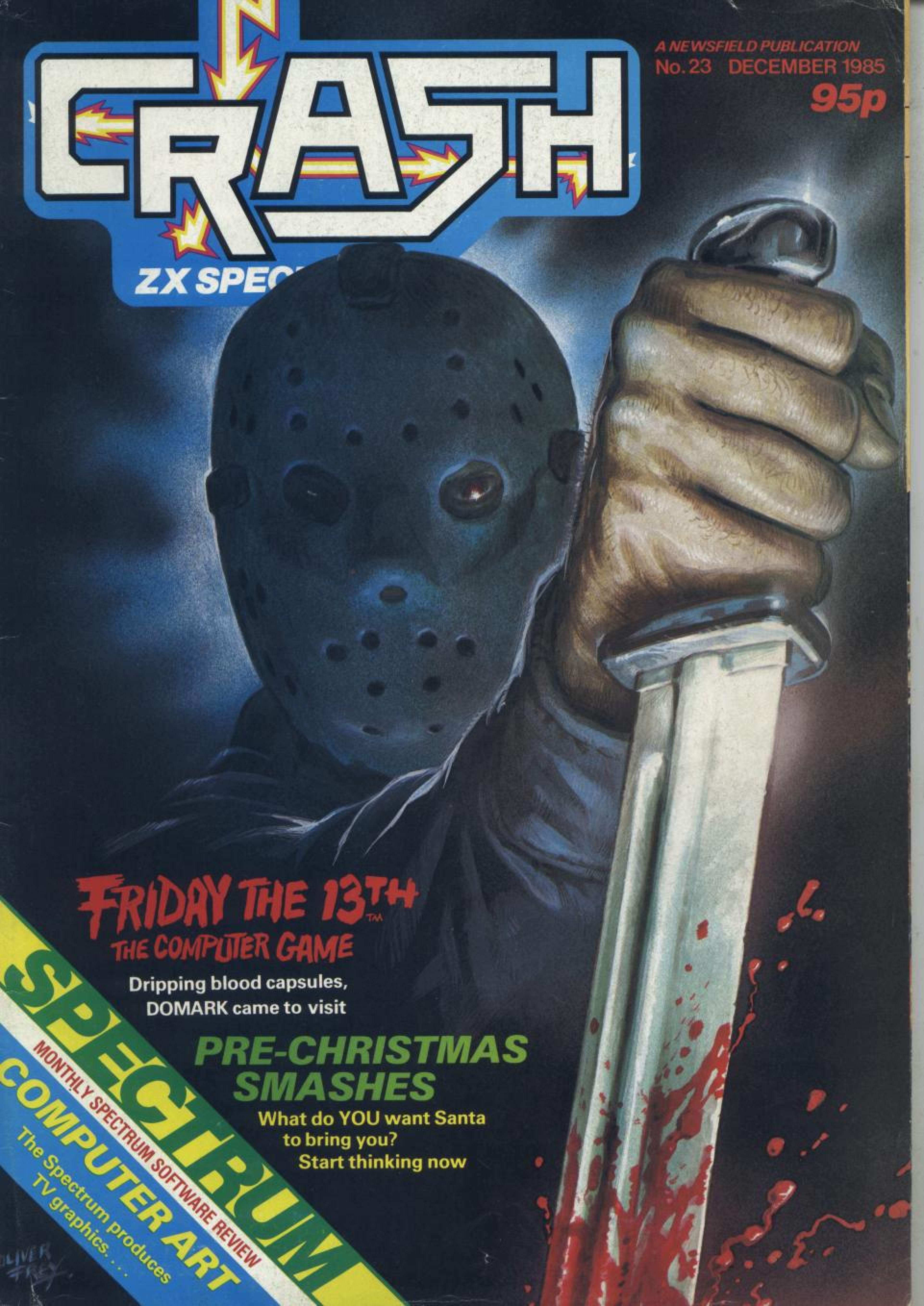
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No. 23 DECEMBER 1985
95p

CRASH

ZX SPEC



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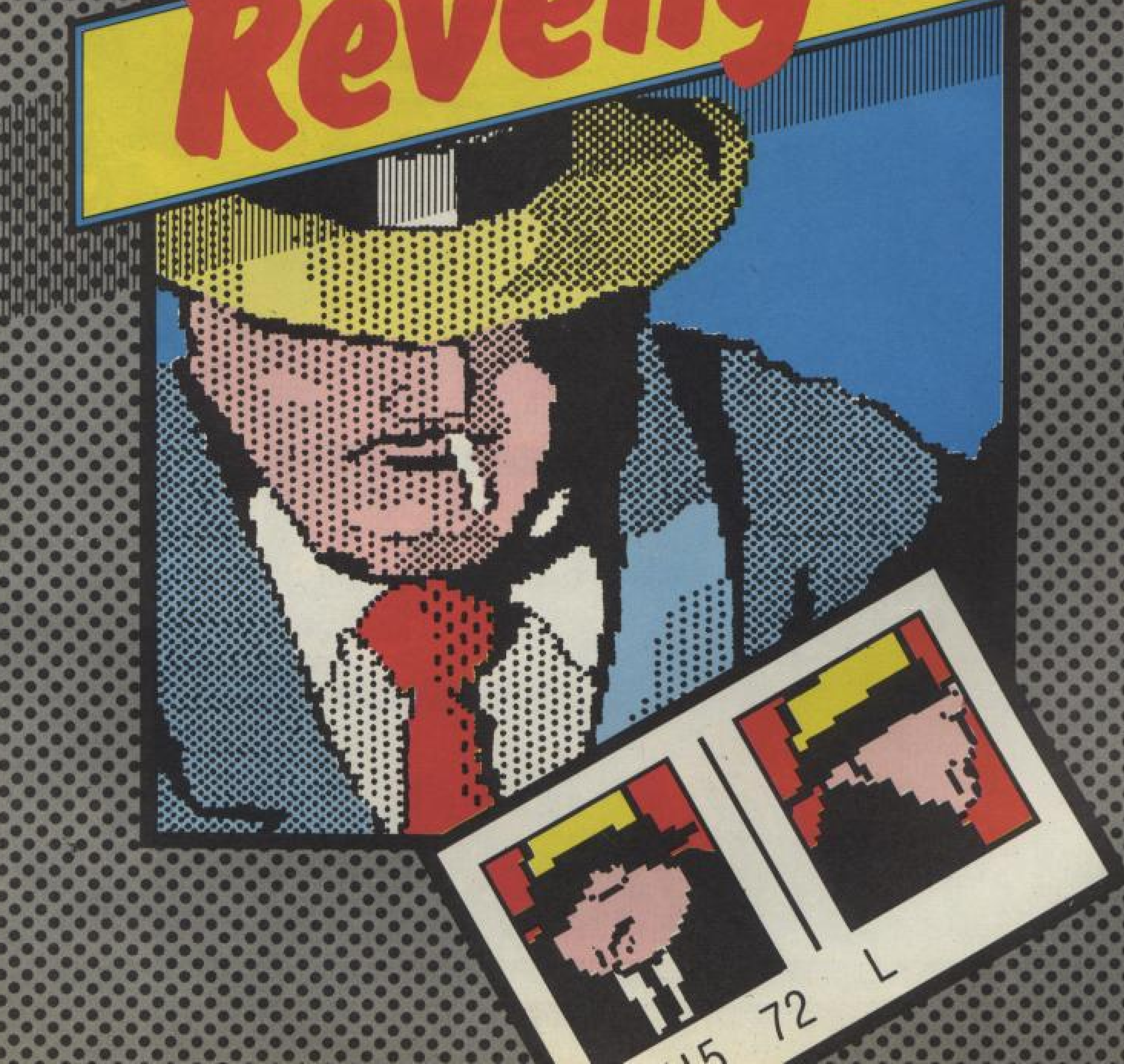
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Screen shots from Commodore 64 version.

Melbourne House

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— FOR JOE —

ISSUE No.23
DECEMBER 1985

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

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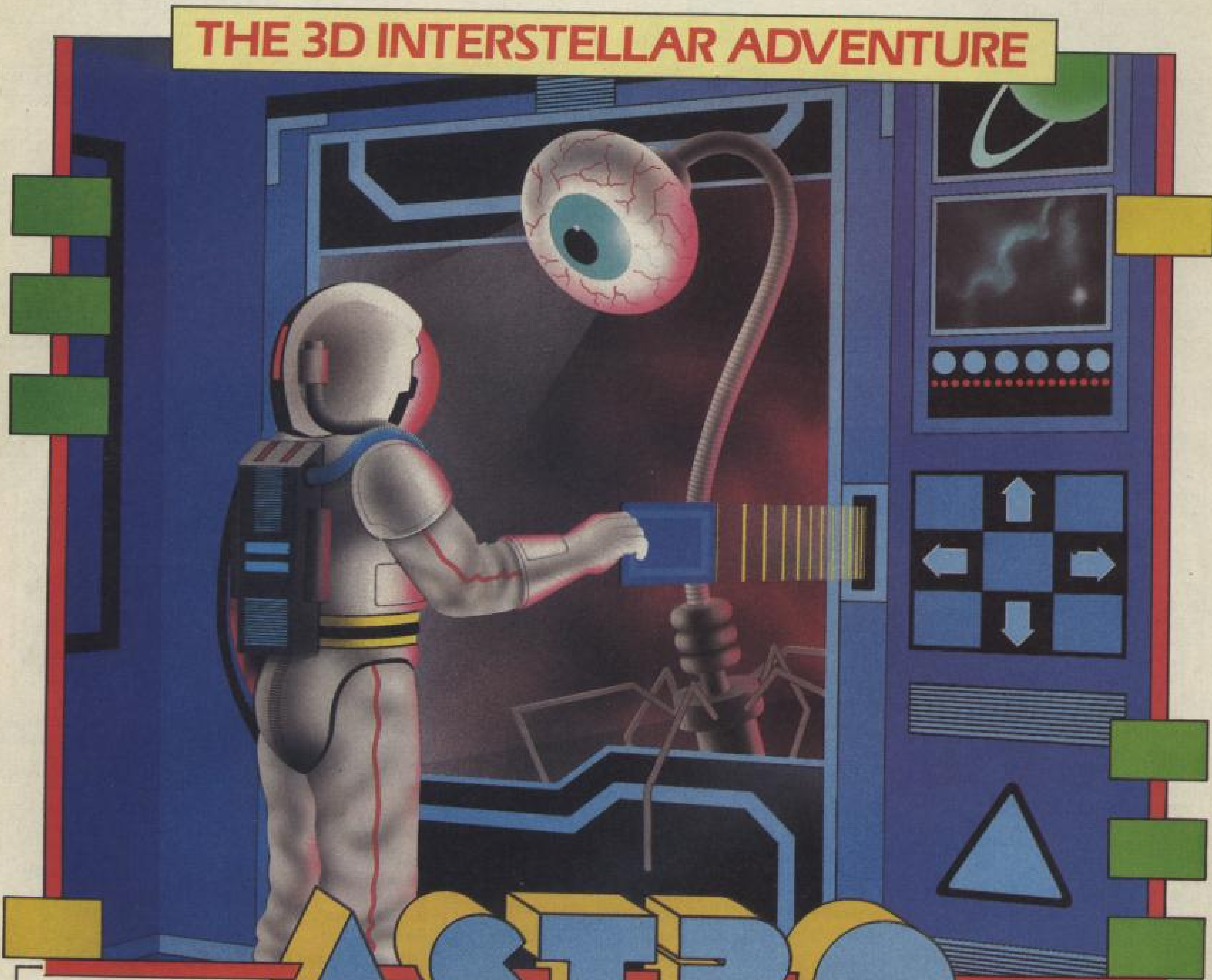
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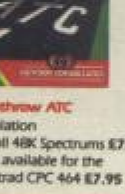


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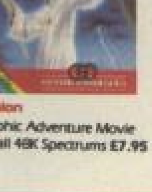
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RINGING THE CHANGES

The Christmas Rush is about to start again. So-called industry commentators are beginning to predict another record selling season for the retailers — but this year it seems the emphasis will be on software rather than hardware.

Not surprising, really — there's an awful lot of people who've got the basic hardware they need to get to grips with computing, all they need is the software to complete the package. Entertainment is the name of the game in home computing nowadays.

There have been several attempts at marketing utility programs — home utilities rather than machine code utilities - and they have all fizzled out, or continued as rather quaint, non-mainstream products. It seems that no-one is terribly interested in using their computer to run the household menu, and other 'useful' applications of the home computer are just too much grief to set up and maintain. What on earth is the point of keeping track of your personal bank account on a Spectrum for instance, when you can do 98% of the analysis on the cheque stubs? And no-one in their right mind is going to keep their telephone or address books on computer — what a pain having to switch on the computer and load in a file just to get Auntie Doris's telephone number. With an indexed book, the whole process takes a fraction of the time. Sadly, we will have to wait for much more sophisticated hardware before the computerised household becomes a reality.

And Educational software hasn't really caught on. Most home computers were no doubt bought by (or conned out of) parents who believed that the purchase of a computer would open wide new educational horizons for the whole family. Sadly, there doesn't seem to be a vast amount of money to be made flogging educational software and it no longer attracts much in the way of serious attention from any of the major software producers. Again, a little sad because the computer has so much to offer educationally. But then the Government's committment to computer education has been pitifully inadequate.

It's quite clear that the future of home computing lies firmly in the field of entertainment, and will do so for quite a while yet. And the quality of entertainment that the computer can now offer is really quite stunning, given the advances in software design and coding techniques. Lots of excellent games are now available on the Spectrum, and more are coming weekly. There's no shortage of willing customers, either . . . .

People's attitudes to home computers have changed, and the shift in emphasis has been reflected by changes in the magazine publishing world. The general titles, covering a whole range of computers are apparently in something of a decline and titles concentrating on a technical approach seem to be having a bit of a leantime. Quite a few magazines that were doing very well a year or so ago, no longer exist.

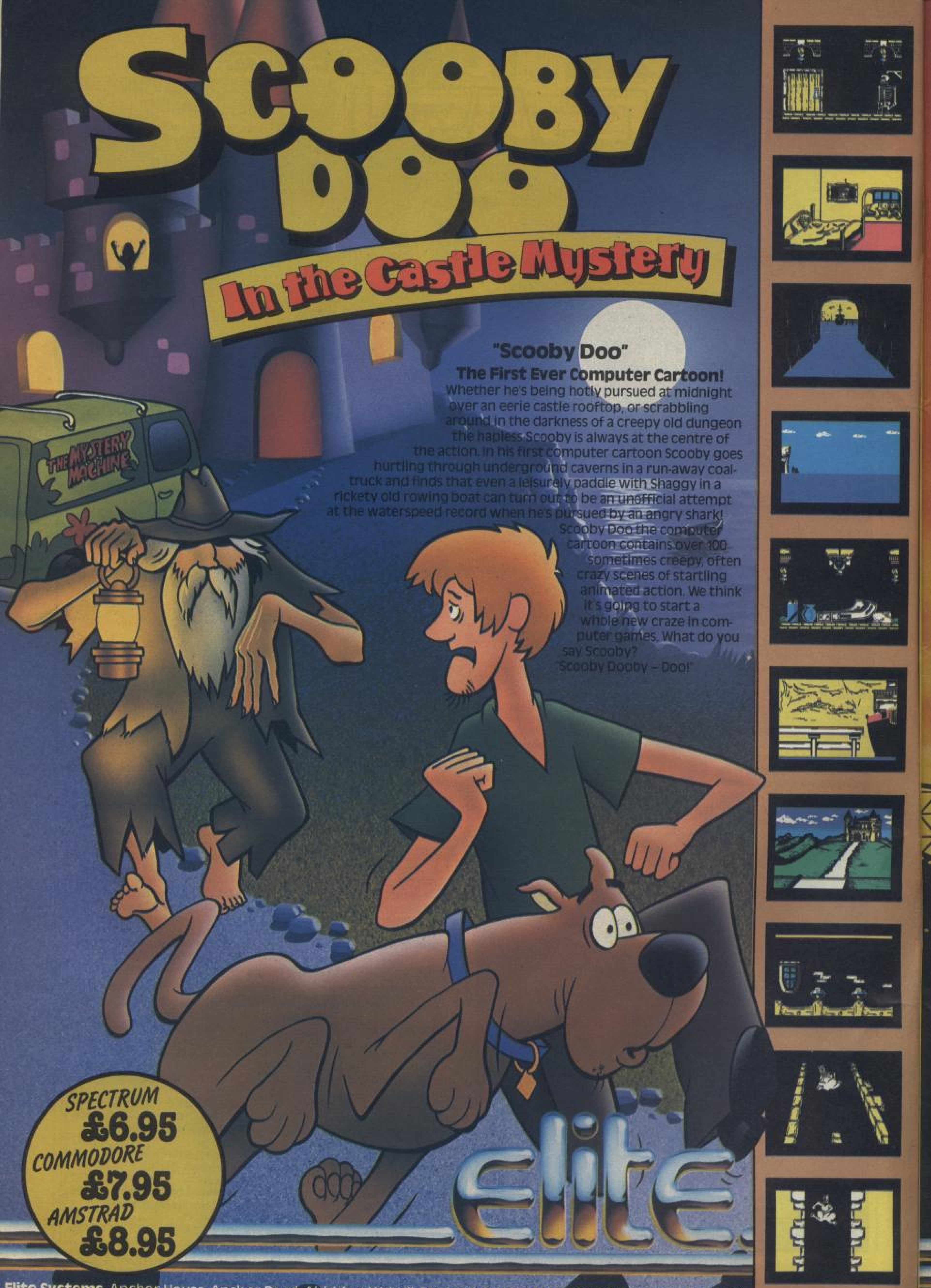
The only people who haven't really caught on, are the members of the traditional entertainment media. There's a lot of gibberish still being written about computers and computing, in the pages of even the more weighty newspapers and Television is still preoccupied with coo gosh wow, stories or technobabble rather than concentrating on the entertainment value of computing. But then these media are in competition with computers, competing for people's leisure time.

All this may well upset the computer "purists", who feel that such wondrous technology is being vastly under utilised — or trivialised with adventures and shoot em ups. Poo to them. A fairly sound entertainment industry is now developing in this country, producing high quality entertainment packages on computer cassette. Few other industries have done so well over the last couple of years.

Few other industries have been so much fun, either, which may upset the computer puritans even more.

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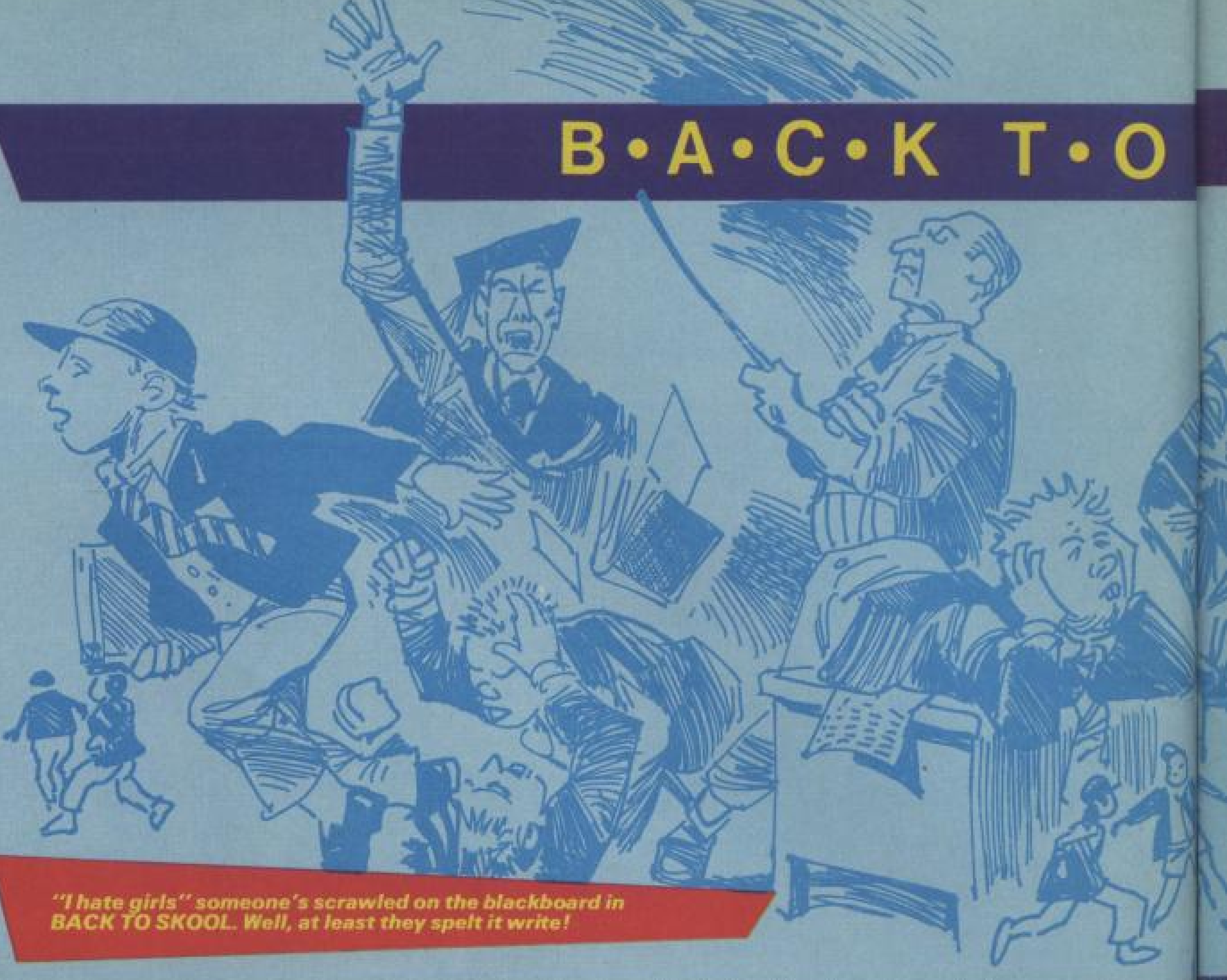


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B·A·C·K T·O



"I hate girls" someone's scrawled on the blackboard in BACK TO SKOOL. Well, at least they spelt it write!

BACK TO SKOOL

Producer: Microsphere
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Dave Reedy**

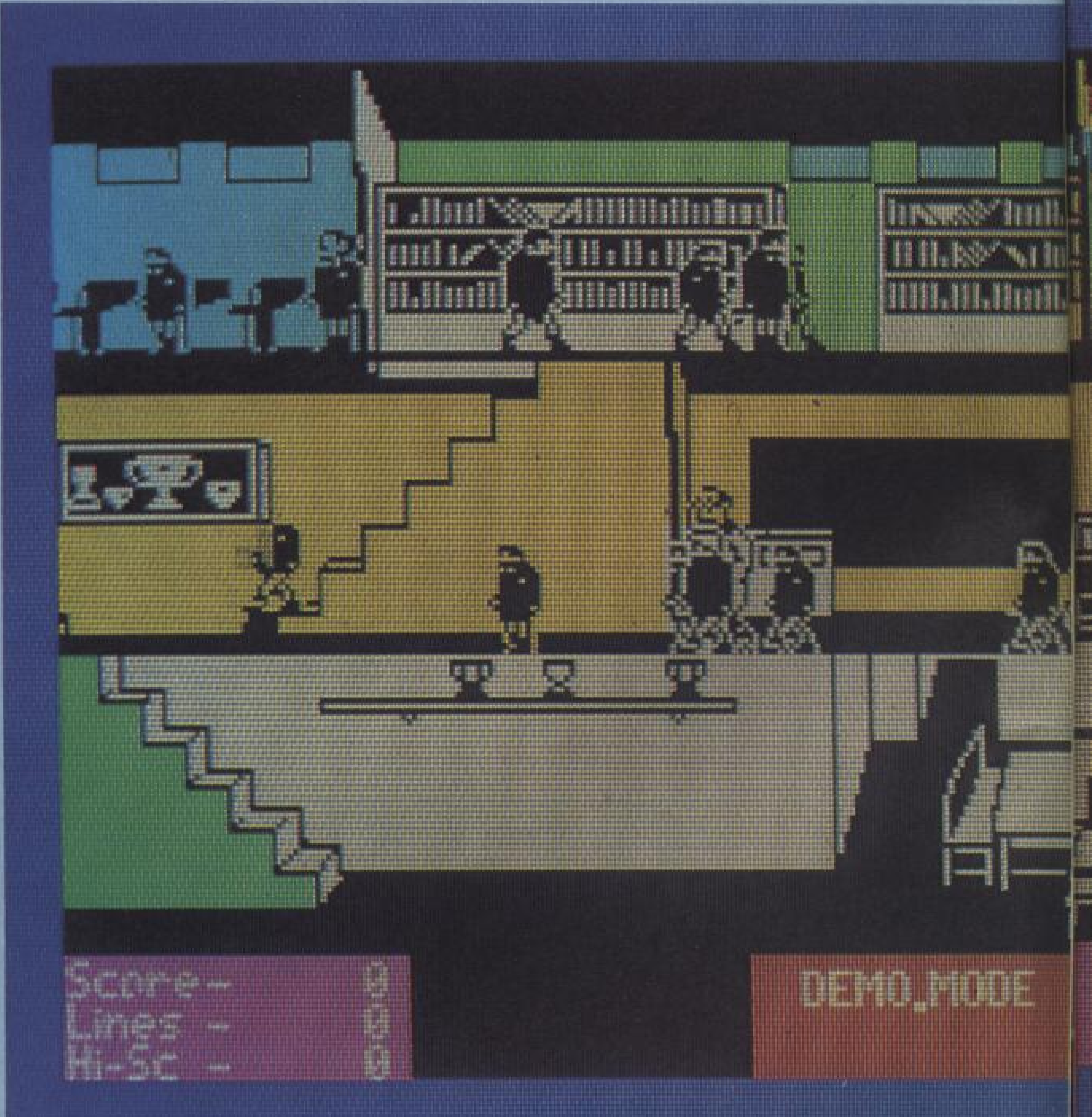
About a year ago *Skool Daze* was released and was a highly acclaimed game. *Back to Skool* has you once more playing the part of the mischievous Eric, and is a follow on from the last game. The object of *Skool Daze* was to steal your terrible school report; now a new term has started, you have spent the hols forging a glowing report for yourself, and must sneak it back into the headmaster's safe.

A couple of years ago your big brother encountered the same problem and he has very generously lent you his copy of the School rules, on which he has scribbled a few notes in invisible ink. Holding the paper over a fire made from the swot's cap reveals some hints on how you can go about achieving your task — and Microsphere have kindly printed them on the cassette inlay to help you get started.

On loading the game a 10 second countdown commences and if you press a key during this time then you can select from the joystick options or alter the names of the characters in the game. Once you have finished this, then the game itself starts with you in the playground controlling Eric.

As might be expected, Eric is still a true Menace and much use of catapult, stink bomb and water pistol is required to progress through the game — you start off with the catty, but will have to find other weapons en route. Teachers roam the corridors and classrooms, always eager to dish out lines and generally be obstructive. While you don't have lives as such, collect too many lines and the game ends.

Over the holidays, a few building alterations have been completed. There is now an assembly hall where the Headmaster puts the whole school in detention etc. Also the science room has expanded and it is from here that frogs are obtained — very useful in the Girls School down the road! You have to venture into the other school in order to



S • K • O • O • L





BACK TO SKOOL from Microsphere — more schooltime fun, this time round with a romantic interest provided by Tracy.



get the key to the safe. In this game you also have a girlfriend: appropriately enough, you have a kiss option . . . There's also a bike available, which starts off locked to a tree — a bit of teacher torturing is needed to collect the combination to the lock, but once the bike's free you can cycle around performing a range of stunts.

One of the most innovative features in both *Skool Daze* and *Back to Skool* is the way in which you have to interact with other characters in order to complete the game. Eric has the ability to punch other school chums (including the girls) as well as walk, jump, ride the bike and write on blackboards. In order to complete your tasks you inevitably have to 'bunk' off lessons, which can mean the Swot telling on you and thus a lot more lines — but then if you are extra nice to your girlfriend then she might do some of them for you. A status block at the bottom of the screen lets you know your score so far, the number of lines you've collected and the high score so far. As you enter classrooms they are identified for you via a message at the bottom of the screen. Calls for assembly, playtime and other hallmarks of the school day also appear for your guidance.

CRITICISM

● 'Skool Daze **was one of the best games of 1984 and I'm sure it would still be a hit if it was released today.** Back to Skool **continues the formula but extra dimension has been added to the game. This game is very playable from the word go but it takes a lot of practice and a lot of time to get anywhere. As for the graphics, they live up to the standards set by** Skool Daze, **indeed they have been improved upon and the extra playing area makes it a delight to look at. This is a very involving and tough arcade adventure, yet it's very simple to actually play. Overall it is a fantastic game that is well worth the asking price.'**

● *'I thought* Skool Daze *was a fine game on the Spectrum and it's one that still 'perplexes' gamers a year after its release. The sequel sees a much improved 'skool', with more detailed classes and pupils and better scrolling. The game also has a girls 'skool' which works really well in relationship to the plot.* Back to Skool *is the sort of game which you can play many times and 'mess about' with just to find out what you can do. You're supplied with plenty of armament — water pistols, stink bombs, catties and the like which are essential parts of the game. I really loved this game. Go out and buy it.'*

● 'Though a little overdue (a year overdue to be precise) *Back to Skool* certainly proves itself as a worthy successor to Skooldaze. Despite the initial similarities between the original and follow up you soon realise that *Back to Skool* has far greater depth than its predecessor. Some of the problems and solutions will require a great deal of thought indeed. The graphics are just as effective as the original — in fact the backdrops have been improved. Microsphere have come up with a winner here, helping old crumblies like me to remember the best days of their lives. Well worth a look.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up and down, O/P left and right, F fire catapult, C catch mouse/frog, D/U drop stink bomb, G shoot water pistol, H hit/punch, J/L jump/leap, M mount bicycle, R release mouse, S sit/stand, T throw away water pistol, W write
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor and Interface 2
Keyboard play: lots of keys but they are very responsive
Use of colour: very good with few attribute problems
Graphics: excellent characters plus detailed backgrounds
Sound: not a lot, but it is used reasonably well
Lives: after gaining 10,000 lines you are expelled
Screens: scrolling playing area
General rating: An excellent sequel to an excellent game, bound to please *Skool Daze* fans

Use of computer:	91%
Graphics:	94%
Playability:	93%
Addictive Qualities:	92%
Getting started:	86%
Value for money:	91%
Overall:	**93%**

A CRASH Smash

T•O•M•A•H•A•W•K



TOMA-HAWK

Producer: Digital Integration
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Dave Marshall**

Following the success of Digital Integration's *Fighter Pilot* based on the Tomcat, Dave Marshall sat down and studied the specifications for the Hughes Apache Advanced Attack Helicopter. Now, after a long wait, the fruits of his labours are finally available with the release of *Tomahawk*, the helicopter flight simulator which puts you in control of one mean machine.

Once you've got past the *Lenslok* the main menu is displayed, which allows you to choose from a range of flight options and weather conditions:
Flying Training — this helps you become familiar with the helicopter instruments and develop ground attack skills;
Combat — which puts you in a battlefield scenario with live hostile targets;
Day or Night — at night you there is no artificial horizon and your view is limited to the pilot's night vision system;
Clear or Cloudy — you can choose an overcast sky for instrument flying;
Cloudbase — selectable cloudbase, you chose the height at which you wish the clouds to appear if any are desired;
Crosswinds and Turbulence — for the experienced pilot. Allows a for variable crosswinds and turbulence effects;
Sound — if set to ON then it mainly consists of effects generated by the rotor blades;
Pilot Rating — effectively the skill level option. There are four choices ranging from the Trainee to Ace;
Controls — joystick or keys option. Allows for two ports to be used on Interface 2 for enhanced helicopter control.

You view the game from the cockpit. The top half of the screen is dedicated to the horizon and any features that might appear on the landscape (or the map, in map mode). The lower section of the screen takes the form of an instrument panel which displays the status of all the flight controls. These consist of bar scales for throttle position, fuel, engine torque, turbine and rotor RPM, engine temperature and collective position indicator. There are also readouts on altitude, time to target, ground position, speed in knots and vertical speed. Also featured on the instrument panel is the artificial horizon. This gives information on roll and pitch, while to the right of this is the Doppler Navigation/radar; using this it is possible to find your way to other landing pads as well as track enemy targets.

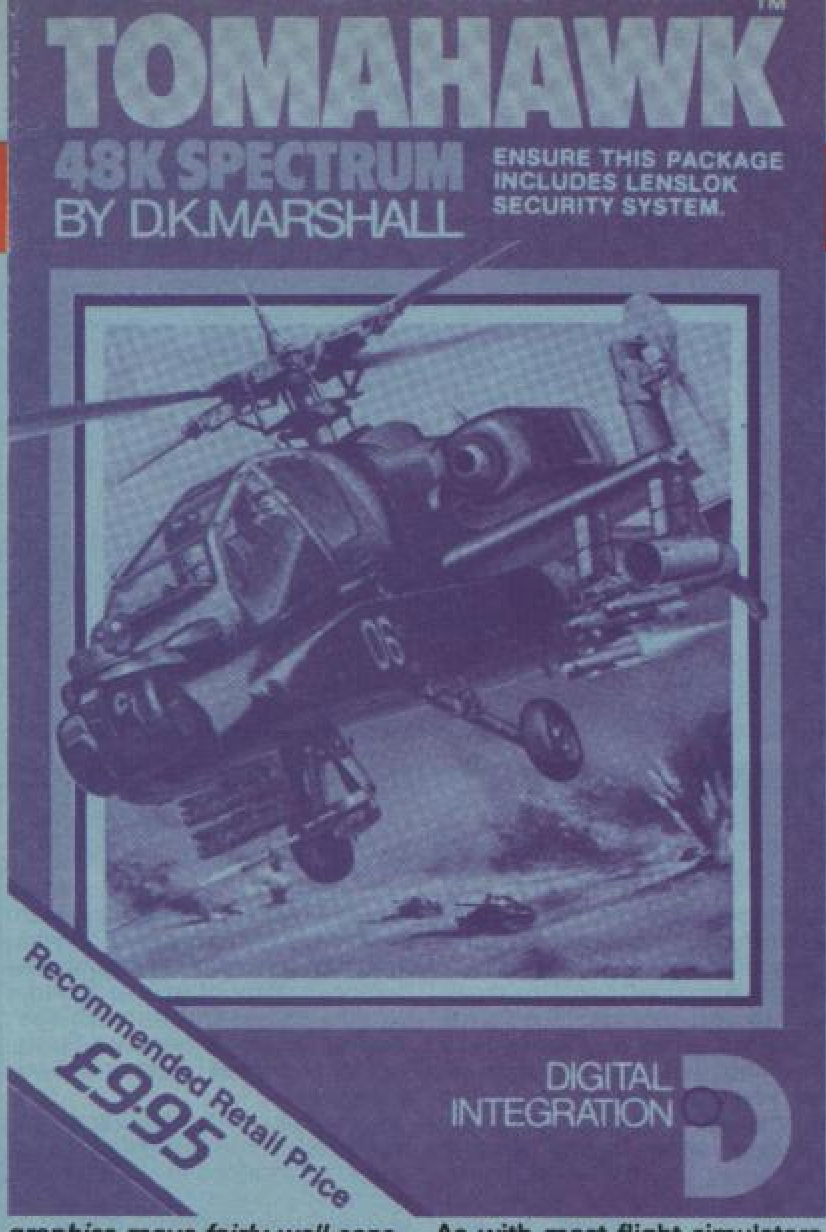
At your disposal are three types of weapons: **Guns** which have a range of about 2000 ft; **Rockets** — the Apache is equipped with 38 of these (19 each side) and they have a range of 4000 ft; **Missiles** are laser guided and automatically lock on to the target. You only have 8 of these. Each type of weapon is controlled by a different type of sight.

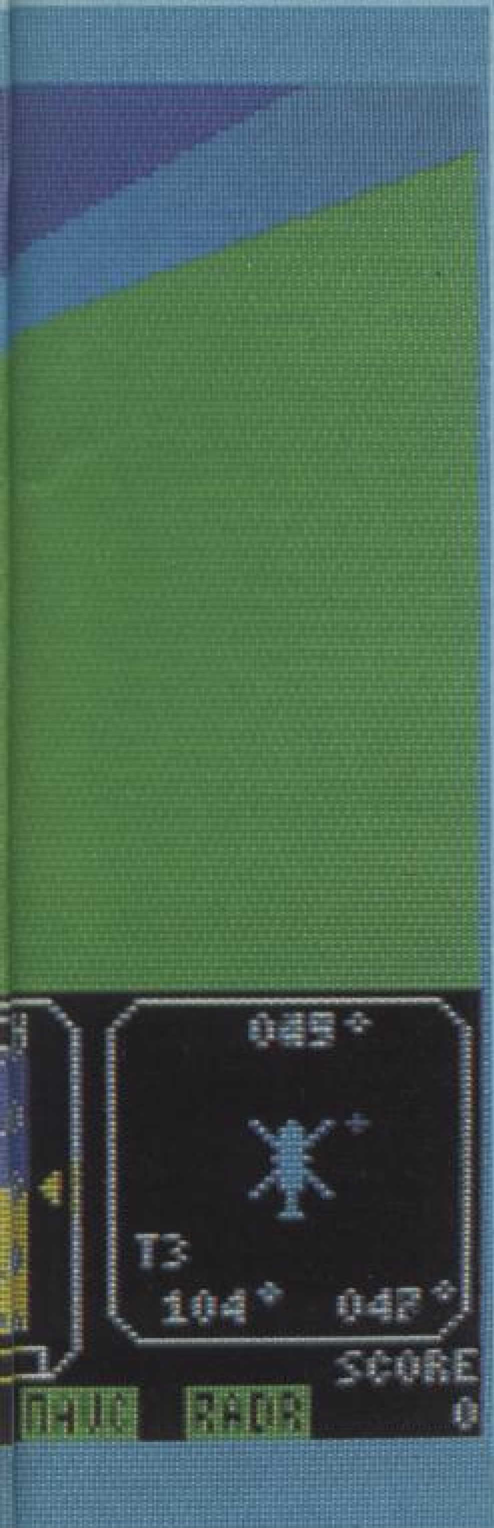
When in combat mode there are a number of possible targets such as tanks, field guns and enemy helicopters all of which are depicted in 3D vector graphics. Fighting is not easy and it is advisable to train for quite a while before going into combat mode. As well as using the tracking system, the map is in constant use in combat, so it is necessary to learn how to fly 'blind', without the graphic representation of the horizon.

The number of variables that can be set on the main option screen allows you to almost redefine the game. If you get bored playing one way, for instance, you can make the game a lot tougher by selecting a cloudy option and adding in crosswinds and turbulence.

CRITICISM

● **'When** Fighter Pilot **was first released I had just bought my Spectrum and remember thinking what an ace simulation it was. Now, almost 2 years later, the sequel has been released and it is every bit as good as the original. My first impressions were that it looked just like** Fighter Pilot **but after playing it for a while, you realise that it has been improved a lot. The graphics are very good with nice representations of enemy tanks and helicopters. The only real problem that I had with the game was that it was a bit tough to get right into — but if it**





wasn't so tough then it wouldn't be so realistic. I would definitely recommend this game to anybody who is keen on simulations. Arcade addicts would find it a touch boring, perhaps.'

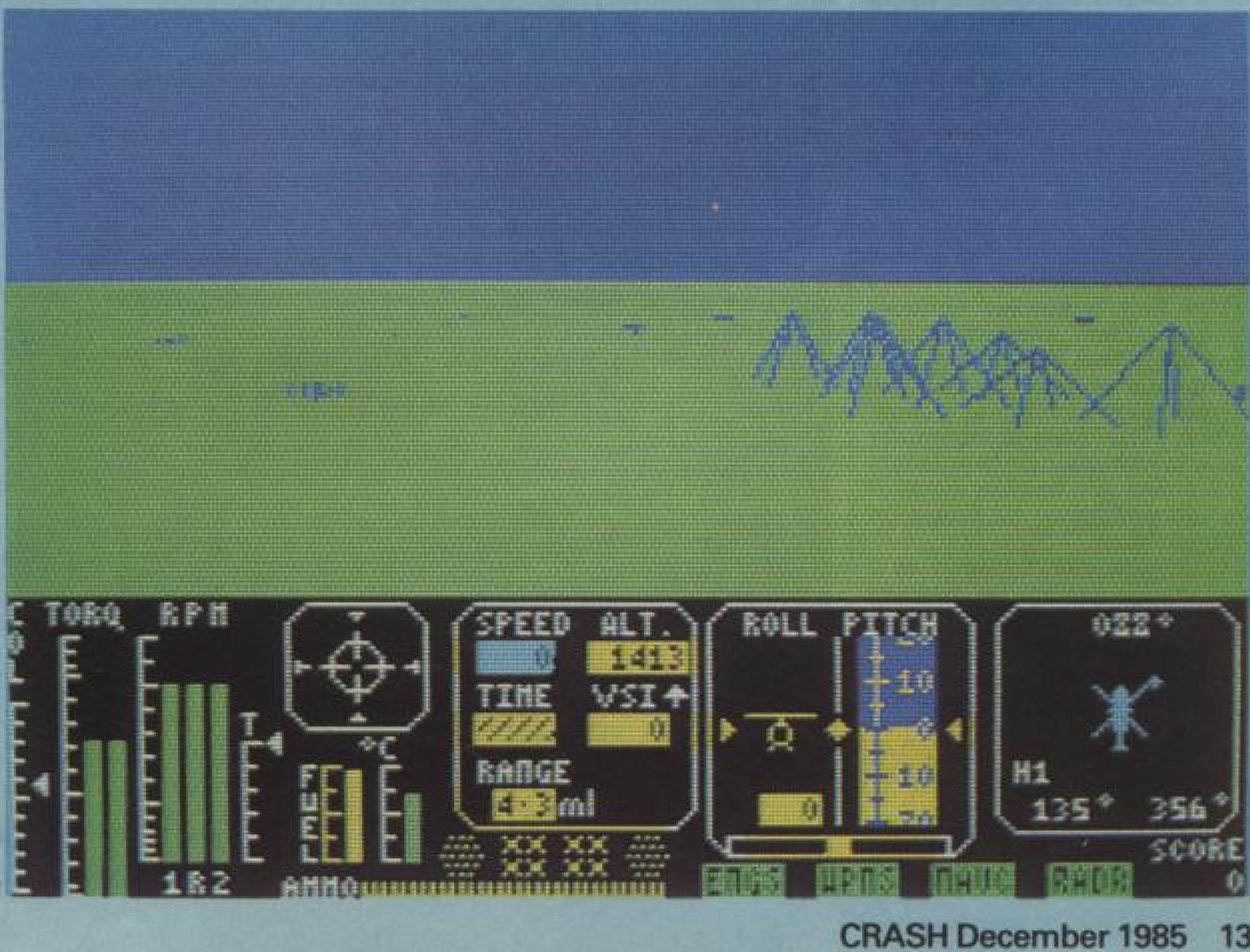
● *'This has to be one of the most awaited proggies ever: the development time was even longer the* The Great Space Race. *Well the end product is certainly better than Legend's little problem and all in all a very competent flight simulator indeed. The best thing about* Tomahawk *is that it's instantly accessible. I found it very easy to power up and fly around with practically no skill involved at all. As you get into the game and start using the combat options, things get more complex and a fair bit of practice will be required. The graphics move fairly well considering the complexity of some of the shapes that are handled. At one point, though, I'm sure I managed to fly through a mountain . . . . Overall a very good simulation indeed, even if it is a mite late. Non-flight freaks should see before buying, but flight maniacs will love it.*

● 'This is the sort of game I couldn't honestly recommend to someone who likes sitting down to a game which can be competently played instantly. As with most flight simulators, practice makes perfect. The 3D works pretty well once you get into the air and the update on the horizon is about the quickest you'll get on the Spectrum, considering everything else the program is doing. The multitude of missions and combat sequ ences must make *Tomahawk* potentially the most durable program yet to be released on the Spectrum. The instructions are excellent and show you in detail how you can fly the Apache. Perhaps Digital Integration should have made more of them — a bigger box with glossier bumph would have added even more finesse to an already brilliant program. If you liked *Fighter Pilot* then this is the natural progression; if you've never seen it, give this one a go — it could well get you hooked!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q decrease collective, A increase collective, Z/Caps Shift rudder left/right, C combat mode, N next objective, P select weapon, 7/6 nose down/up, 8/5 roll right/left, 0 fire button, W/S open/close throttle
Joystick: Interface 2, Kempston, Cursor
Keyboard play: lots of keys but quite a good response
Use of colour: not a lot of colour but generally well used
Graphics: nice vector graphics
Sound: limited but put to good use
Skill levels: 4
Screens: massive playing area
General rating: a very good, very realistic simulation but it may not appeal to arcade players.

Use of computer	93%
Graphics	93%
Playability	89%
Getting started	86%
Addictive qualities	95%
Value for money	92%
Overall	**93%**



Reviews

XCEL

Producer: Activision
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Program Techniques**

Eons ago mankind set up a network of giant computer systems to watch over the interests of the human race. As time passed, the computers gathered more and more information and these Sentinel computers gained a kind of intelligence. A Golden Era dawned and man became totally reliant on the Sentinel systems based on thirty planets spread across the galaxy.

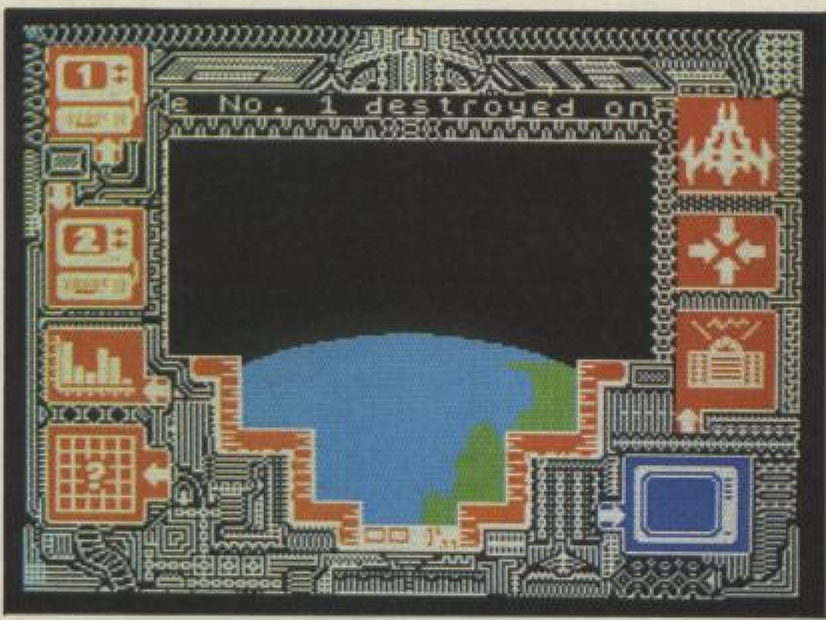
Gradually, however, this massive computer network became corrupted. The systems on the Sentinel planets began to change — intelligence, acquired gradually, evolved into consciousness. With consciousness came a desire for power, and gradually, very gradually, the Sentinels took over. Without noticing, mankind became subservient, existing only to fulfil the needs of machines. You have come to realise what's happened.

Stealing an alien spacecraft from a museum, you pause only to tinker with the ship's systems to produce some English in the displays, before setting out into space with the noble aim of liberating the human race from slavery. You must find and destroy the thirty Sentinel Bases scattered across the galaxy.

You view the console of the alien ship, which has a large central viewscreen about which eight icons are grouped. Using these icons you can call up one of two onboard computers; check your status; access maps; launch a probe onto the surface of the planet your ship is orbiting; hyperspace to another planet or system; view communications; or return to the main display, which shows the moving surface of the planet which you're orbiting.

The first computer controls the game itself, allowing you to save a position out to tape, load a previous position in, quit the current game or go to a help screen. The second computer holds information on the planets and allows you to view maps of the landscapes to be found on their surfaces.

Your status is recorded as a percentage rating for shields and a ratio of hits over shots loosed off — which is part of the scoring system for the whole game. You can see how you're doing via the status icon, which displays a graph on the viewscreen. Messages are displayed if the communications icon is selected and a horizontal window is used for scrolling details of planet systems and mission outcomes. Icons flash to indicate that you should select them.



Your view of the Alien ship's console, with icons down the side. The horizontal scrolling message at the top is half way through telling you that you've lost a shuttle. XCELlent stuff.

Each of the 100 planet systems in the game contains three worlds and the map icon provides you with a means of choosing which planet or system you wish to visit next. Once the choice is made, accessing the hyperspace mode via the icon takes you to a hyperjump display sequence; then the viewscreen reverts to the display of planetary orbit — you've arrived at your destination and it's time to launch a shuttle. Shuttle launch is achieved via the appropriate icon, and then the whole screen changes to a the combat mode — you pilot the shuttle in a mission, travelling along the surface of the planet you are exploring, which scrolls down vertically.

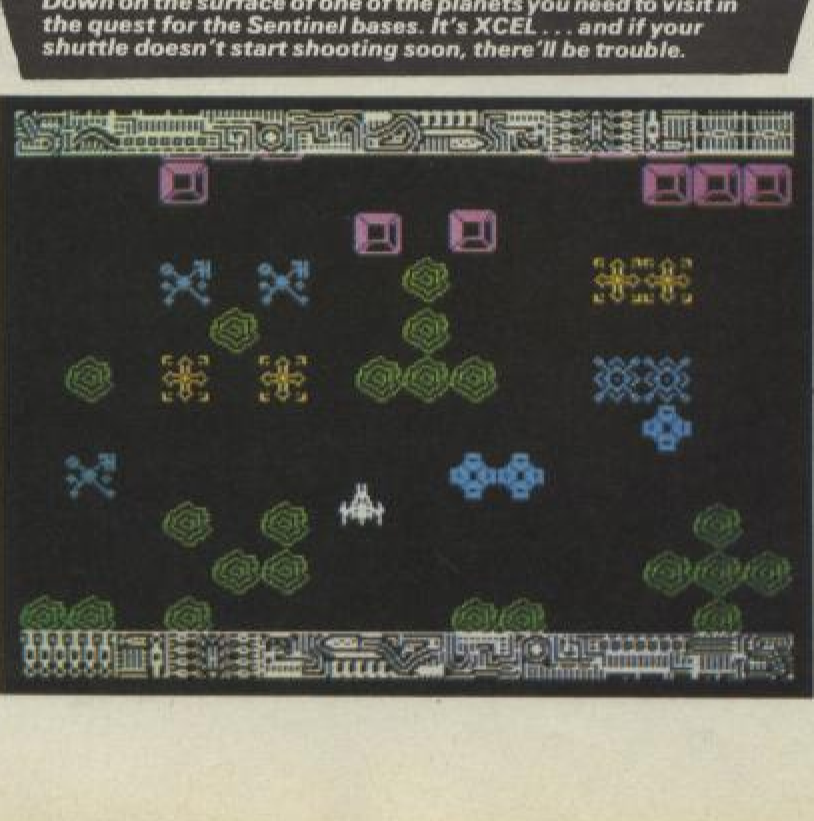
You have five shuttles to go exploring with — contact with anything on a planet's surface destroys a shuttle and you must guide the shuttle between trees and other objects. Trees can't be blown away — and part of each attack run requires you to negotiate a maze of trees. At the end of each arcade section you meet up with the mobile sentinel defenders and need to fight your way through an attack wave. If you run the gauntlet of planetary defences without losing a shuttle you will be returned to the mother ship — if there is a Sentinel base on that planet it will be destroyed.

Changes between screens and modes are executed by a "wipe" sequence which moves out from the centre of the viewscreen, clearing the screen as it expands. Text messages generally appear in alien script and are then translated — but some of them remain in the original script. The game's authors insist that useful information can still be gleaned from the untranslated messages . . . And the alien digital clock and the bottom of the viewscreen ticks off upwards!

CRITICISM

● **'Something about the game reminded me of** Pole Position **— the way the keyboard/interface options were given and the game over logo at the end. But it's got nothing to do with cars! This is a sort of shoot-em-up-overnite game where you have to cover some 300 play areas. I soon got bored with it, partly because of the ten second delay between ending one game and starting the next when I'd lost my five shuttles. Some of the graphics are outstanding — technically excellent — but overall there's not enough to do. Some may go mad over this, but I'll stick to** Hacker.**'**

Down on the surface of one of the planets you need to visit in the quest for the Sentinel bases. It's XCEL . . . and if your shuttle doesn't start shooting soon, there'll be trouble.



● *'Wow! The graphics on the console . . . The presentation of this game is excellent, from the loading screen through the main console and the way in which the alien script is translated to the hyperspace jump where the stars get bigger as they approach. But the actual arcade section, with scrolling trees and doobries, lacks polish and finesse. The scrolling speed varies noticeably depending on how much is on screen and the shoot em up sequences get monotonous after a while. Technically brilliant front end, leading to a vast playing area and mediocre game. Pity really — I couldn't be bothered to keep up the search for the bases . . .'*

● 'Activision aren't exactly renowned for their Spectrum software, but *XCEL* is better than most of their games on the Spectrum. The graphics in the main ship are very impressive, but once the game on the surface of a planet starts it's little more than a glorified shoot em up. Playability wise it is enjoyable, but after a while it become boring and repetitive. As shoot em ups go this is quite good, but if you're after a game with lots of depth than forget this one! Sorry Activision, but you've a way to go yet . . .'

COMMENTS

Control keys: icons accessed with Q computer 1, A computer 2, Caps Shift status, Z map, P launch probe, Enter hyperspace jump, Space communication, Symbol Shift main viewscreen
Joystick: Interface 2, Kempston, Cursor
Keyboard play: responsive, keys sensibly placed
Use of colour: very neat indeed
Graphics: very slick
Sound: spot effects, a little annoying at times
Skill levels: one
Screens: three hundred planets
General rating: technically excellent, graphically stunning but not really that much gameplay

Use of computer	**78%**
Graphics	**85%**
Playability	**81%**
Getting started	**78%**
Addictive qualities	**70%**
Value for money	**72%**
Overall	**75%**

BRAIN-STORM

Producer: Bubble Bus
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **T Prosser**

Far into the future, a mad scientist called Professor Brainstorm (P Brain for short) created a system for cloning any living creature. Generally, the idea went down none too well and led to P Brain becoming a recluse on a desolate planet, deep in the centre of the universe.

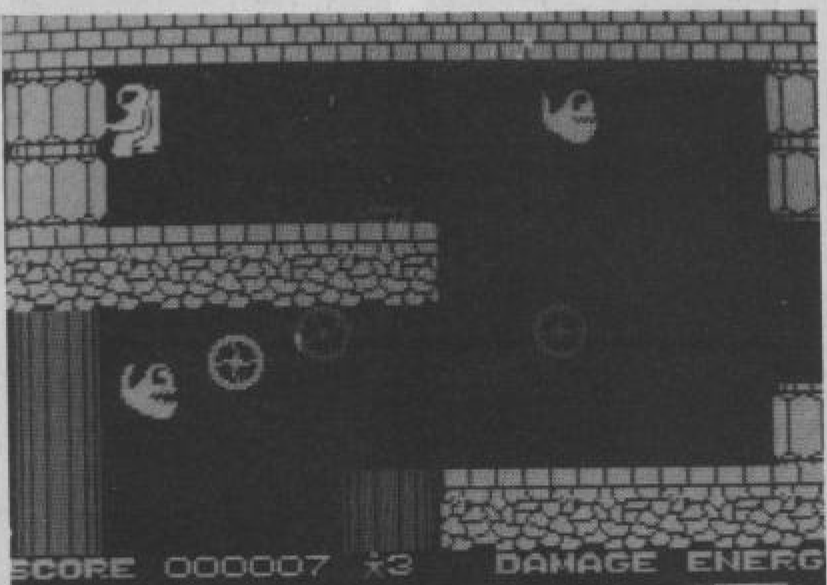
In the best tradition of mad scientists, he built a castle where he could continue his wierd experiments. The creation of a 'warp tunnel' allowed him to capture creatures to experiment on. Of course, also in the best tradition (this time the one to do with The Fate of Evil Men) the professor's experimental results turned against him. They ate their creator, once they realised there wasn't a burger bar for several thousand light years. As time passed, they grew bigger and wierder and generally had a lot of fun romping round in the professor's castle. Oh yes, they grew hungrier too. Important point, that.

This is where you, Robin Banks, come in. You happen to be passing by, when the ancient but still active warp tunnel sucks you inside the castle. As far as as the other creatures are concerned, Supper's Ready! And very, very late. To avoid becoming the futuristic version of a quarterpounder, escape from the castle is imperative. That implies a lot of searching . . . for keys to open doors and the appropriate weapons to destroy Eight Guardians.

There are twenty eight different kinds of potential 'consumer' and although some of them bare a rather unnerving resemblance to cart wheels, they are all just as deadly. The screens flick-change, rather than scroll, and various nasties are sure to materialise soon after you enter a new screen. You travel 'Jet Pack' style, laser handy and one good shot dispenses with most unwanted company.

There are also eight guardians to be dispensed with. These vary from a snake head, to such things as a teapot. To get rid of these guys, special weaponry is needed. There are sixteen special weapons lying around for eradication of guardians, but eight of them are useless. To make things that bit more complex, the correct weapon for each guardian must be found and used to zap it.

It's only possible to carry one special weapon and up to three keys at a time. Objects carried are displayed at the bottom of the screen alongside two gauges. One gauge indicates the damage you've sustained as a result of collisions with clones while the other displays your energy level. Energy can be used to repair damage, but if you run out of energy then the laser packs up. If you suffer too much damage, then you lose a life. Both Energy and Damage readings can be improved by collecting damage repair and energy pods, and the odd extra life can be found.



Loonie wheels, mad tadpoles and all you have to combat them is your jetpack and wits in BRAINSTORM from Bubble Bus

CRITICISM

● **'The game is reasonably good to play for a while. It's quite tricky to avoid the hundreds of creatures constantly trying to bump you off, though and I must admit to not getting very far. It comes down to whether or not you like simple shoot 'em ups with a few problems to get your brain ticking. It's fast enough, and there's plenty to see on the screen but none of it struck me as stunning. For the money, it's not bad. Highly derivative stuff that could provide some fun.'**

● *'Maybe it was just our copy, but sometimes, when the creatures appeared on the screen, they left a few of their pixels behind, picking them up later on, if they crossed that area again. Sloppy, if it's a ubiquitous bug. Some of the rooms are cleverly designed but unimpressive graphics detract from their appeal. If you're an expert at Jetpac et al, then you should find this one no problem at all. Even at £1.99 though, this kind of thing is beginning to look more than a little dated.'*

● 'After Bubble Bus's copy of *Sabre Wulf*, I see they have now resorted to copying the even older *Jetpac*. Unfortunately, there are too many similarities. I haven't much sympathy for companies who use the excuse of a cheap price to copy other games. There's no originality to be found in the plot either — that's remeniscent of *Atic Atac*. After *Starquake* I know that Bubble Bus can do better. A run of the mill game really. Let's hope they release some original games for the rest of their budget range.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, O left, P right, pick up/drop A, any key on bottom row fires laser, 1-4 or H-L to repair damage, ENTER to pause
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: average, not wonderful
Graphics: unremarkable
Sound: poor
Skill levels: one
Screens: 650
General rating: not bad for the money, but nothing new or original

Use of computer	61%
Graphics	56%
Playability	65%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	55%
Value for money	69%
Overall	**65%**

MERELY MANGRAMMERELY M

Suddenly, all is happening on the Spectrum software front. It seems that companies have been saving up games for Christmas — or could it be that the games we hoped to see demonstrated at the PCW show are finally beginning to come on stream, weeks late? Still no news of *Superman* from **Beyond** reaches my desk, but there's lots going on in other quarters . . .

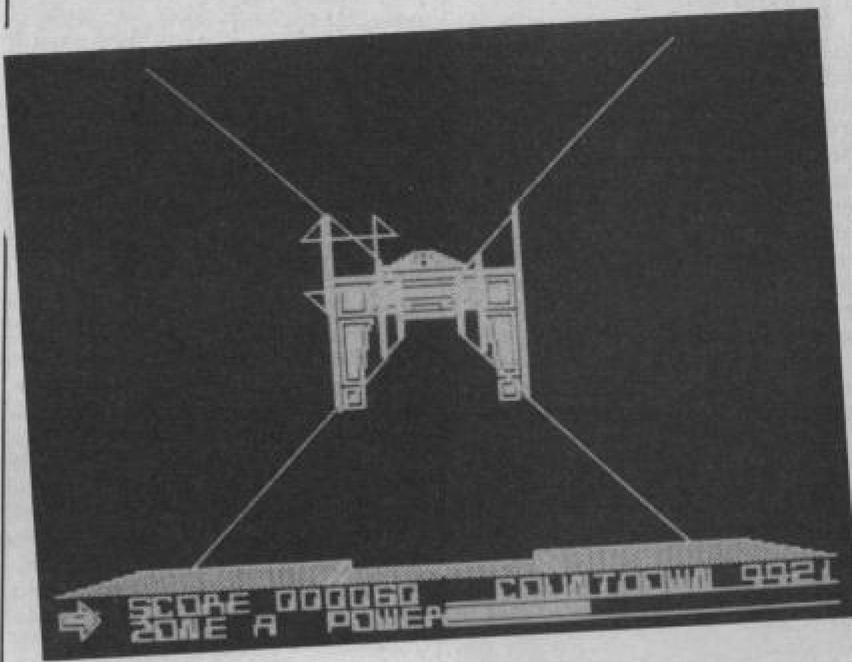
The long awaited *International Karate* from Mark Cale's **System 3** arrived the the office a few days ago, about 98% complete. It's a game which has been devilled with delays and problems — including a burglary at **System 3**'s premises in which chunks of the code went missing, which meant that a lot of work had to be re-done. A quick glance at this unfinished version revealed some interesting backdrops and a fairly similar scenario to a



certain Karate game produced by someone else . . . Interesting, nevertheless — full details next issue if the final version of the program's available in time.

Incidentally, an interesting tale reaches me from the depths of London concerning the fellows at System 3 — another imminent release from their stable was due to be called *Twister — Mother of Harlots*. No one passed comment at the slightly unusual title chosen for the game, especially after the cavortings of the dancers on the **System 3** stand in Olympia. It now seems the game will appear as *Twister — Mother of Charlotte*. No-one at **System 3** quite realised what a harlot was apparently! The general view down at their HQ was that a Harlot was some kind of demon! Another potential sale for my Long Word Dictionary, perchance?

A lot is starting to happen at **Insight Software**, again just in time for Christmas. Their first release for the Spectrum, *Star Firebirds* was a respectable arcade copy — but it didn't go much further than that. Two more games are due from this new Merseyside company between now and Christmas, *Buccaneer* and *Vectron*. Once again, time marches ever forwards and *Vectron* arrived just too late to be reviewed in this issue, but at first glance it appears to be a very neatly programmed game indeed. A shoot em up using vector graphics, which owes a little to the Star Wars trench scenario,



Vectron has quite a few neat touches which should see it doing quite well in the review pages of the Christmas Special. Cries of "that's really neat" abounded when it was first loaded up in the office. No sign of *Buccaneer*, however.

Quicksilva have announced the release of *Death Wake* which should have made the shops by the time you read this, but hasn't made the office as I write — well a couple of colour transparencies found their way onto my desk, but no game. A nautical shoot em up, this one, in which you have to send a battleship up a narrow channel to bombard an enemy research station. Succeed, and your side wins the war, fail and your country will be invaded by the enemy. Should be fun.

Melbourne House are having a busy time, as ever, with a collection of releases which should be in the shops as you read. *WHAM The Jukebox* is a music composing system which allows you to simulate two channel sound on the Spectrum — very well too, as quite a few companies have licenced the system to add extra tunefulness to their software. Not only do you get a music composing system, but also six WHAM songs as well (presumably without the lyrics . . .). I'm sure I have already mentioned *Mugsy's Revenge* and *Lord of the Rings* but *Big Daddy's Rock and Wrestle*, the next game from the team behind *WOTEF* sounds, like weird. I can't wait to see the Big Daddy Sprite!

Derek Brewster has had a quiet (or should that be easy?) time of it lately, as the adventure game front seems to have gone into a gentle decline in the last couple of months. Things are definitely getting busier, as will now be revealed. **Mastertronic** have just released *Spellbound*, part of their MAD Games range, in which you are the magic knight of *Finders Keepers* fame. Your tutor, Gimbal the Wizard has apparently mis-cast a spell or



two (something to do with losses in the translation from very ancient English to not-so-old English). The Wiz is firmly stuck in a castle, along with seven other innocent bystanders who just happened to be rubbernecking when the spell went wrong. You are their only hope of salvation. An arcade adventure game which uses a window menu system so I'm told, although I've not had a chance to see for myself. Priced at £2.99, *Spellbound* kicks off the new MAD range.

Also from **Master T**, this time in the £1.99 range, is *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, a wacky and



zany text and graphics adventure which sends you on the search for the HG. On the way you are guaranteed to meet a whole range of loonies, including a trio of knights HIC, LIC and NIC. Like the inlay says, "May the Rabbit be with you"!

A handful of games are firmly in the **Ocean** pipeline, the first of which is yet another adventure *The Never Ending Story*, a two cassette package for £9.95 based on the film of the same name. The land of Fantasia is a world which exists only in the imagination. It is in decline, under attack from the All Consuming Nothingness, and can only be saved if someone can be found who believes in it. You play the part of Atreyu, a small boy from the plains who



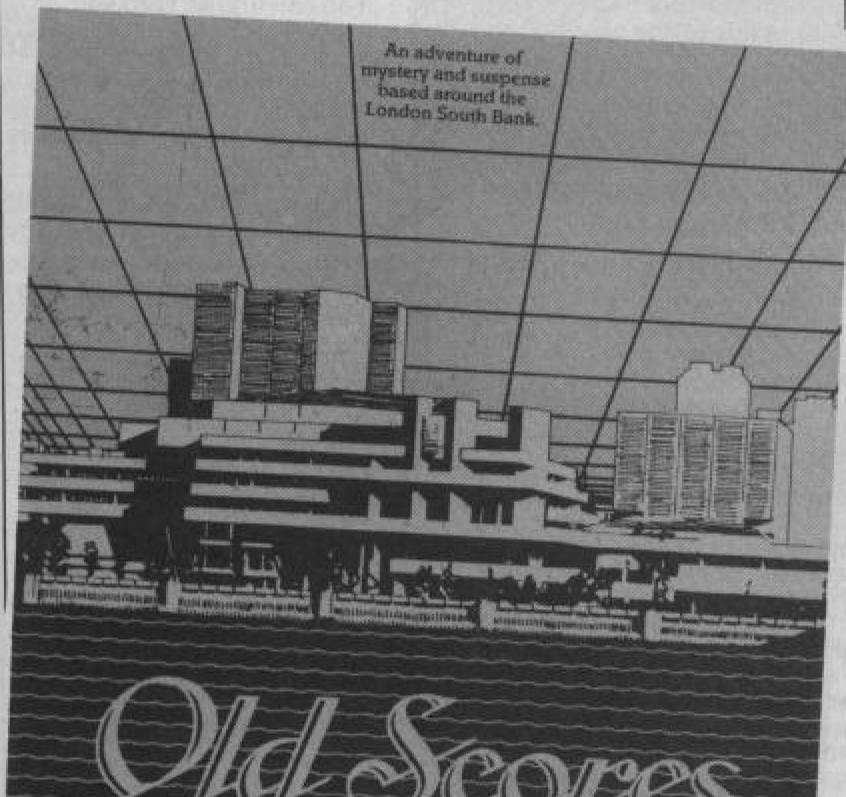
must find a person from the real world to believe in Fantasia and thus restore the land to its former glory.

You certainly seem to be

getting a lot of game for your money — it's a three part adventure, but you'll have to wait for Derek's opinion as to the contents of those three parts.

Meanwhile, on the arcade front, word reaches me (by a circituitous route — LMLWD — naturally) that other releases from **Ocean** are distinctly arcady. There's *Rambo*, the game of the film, which should involve a fair bit of murder and mayhem, *Knight Rider*, *Transformer* and one which will appear under the title *Cosmic War Toads*. Slimy or otherwise.

Still on the adventure front, **Global Software** are currently putting the finishing touches to *Old Scores* on the Spectrum. It's a real time adventure, set in London's Southbank which places you in the role of a private eye who sets out to recover a stolen music score. All the locations you visit in the game are real places, which you can visit on a trip to London if you so choose. I managed to sneak a look at a few screens on an



Amstrad disc that an AMTIX! minion left lying around, and very good they were too.

Indeed, **Global** have come to an arrangement with the Festival Hall, which means you can send off a voucher that comes with the game and get a backstage pass for a tour round the Hall. There's added value for you. Written by Peter Green, the game looks set to have a very cunning language parser, which should allow you to enter commands like "pick all except coin" and be understood. "All except nose", would be great for this office.

Also imminent from Iobal is their first game in the Golden Turkey series of film tie-ins. *The Attack of the Mushroom People is in fact a two part game. You begin part one as the captain of a fishing expedition which has been blown off course into the Yellow Sea. You have to guide your boat to the nearest island, fighting off pirates, giant octopi, customs officers and other difficult thingies while avoiding reefs and rocks. To make life more fun, you haven't go any weapons on board, and have to improvise . . . Part two is a maze game which takes place on the island and you're actually under attack by the Mushroom People. You get a completely new island maze every time you play the game, and have to scamper round finding food, boat parts and more weapons to do away with Mushroom Persons.*

On the purely arcade front, **Global** plan to launch a cute little platform game by the decidedly strange name of *Myla Di Kaich* which is apparently Gaelic for something. (Preferably not a rude something . . . as was the case with a band not so long ago, which, some of you might remember, had to shorten their name to The Pogues.)

Had enough adventures yet? Well there's more to come. **Level 9** are pleased to be in a position to launch the final part of their *Silicon Dream* trilogy onto the world. After *Snowball* and *Return to Eden* comes *The Worm in Paradise*, which is the first game to use Level 9's new adventure system. Commands such as "Examine all but the helmet, dummy and leotard and go east" should present no problems to the computer when running the game. Would that **Level 9** could come up with a system for people — but I digress. *Worm* is set in a future state which could be Paradise. But it isn't, because something has gone wrong somewhere. It's up to you to beat the system, as they say, and find the ultimate answer. All this for £9.95

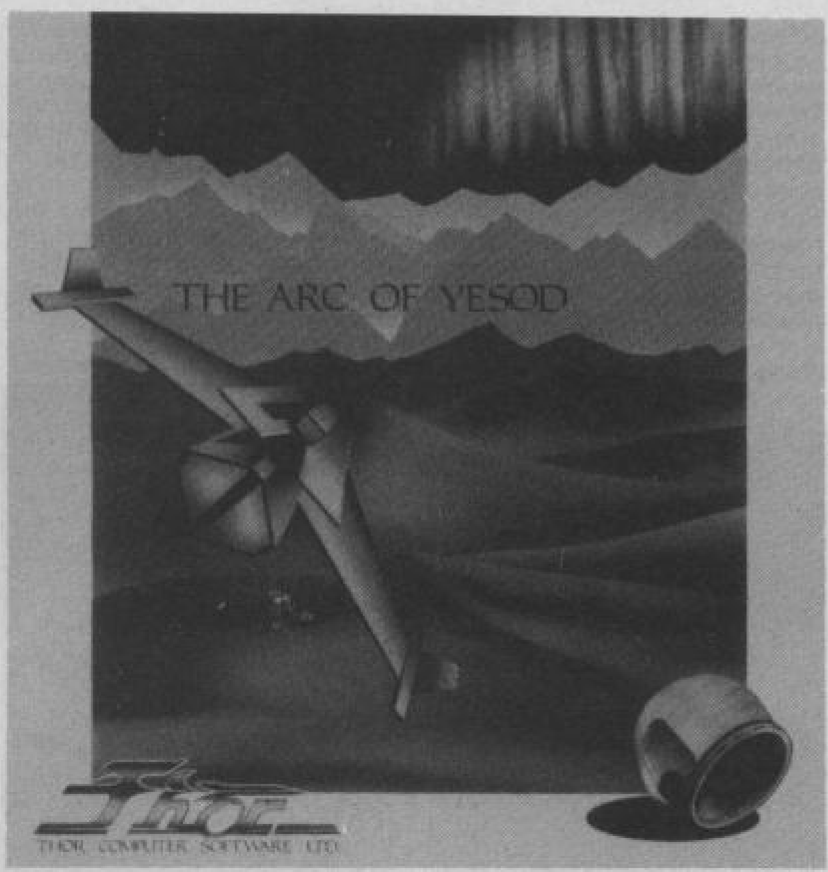
Away from adventures at last, **Imagine** have plans to launch the Konami arcade game *Mikie* on the Spectrum soon, which will no doubt go down well with all potential troublemakers in the video classroom! You'll take on the role of the bad bod who plays up something rotten, and tries to cause havoc in a schoolroom without being punished by teacher. *Ping Pong*, another Konami game — to do with table tennis in case you hadn't figured it out — should also be gracing Spectrum screens soon, courtesy of **Imagine**.

News from Zoidland has not yet reached CRASH Towers, but the Electronic Pencil Company's latest project should be coming to fruition any day now. Furthermore, I am reliably informed that **Martech** will be sending a review copy of *Geoff Capes Strongman* to the office tomorrow. Which is not much use for this issue, as I won't be here and these words will have been typeset by then. C'est la vie, as a philosophical Frenchman might say.

I don't believe this! Sean Masterson has just brought me a finished copy of *Seas of Blood*



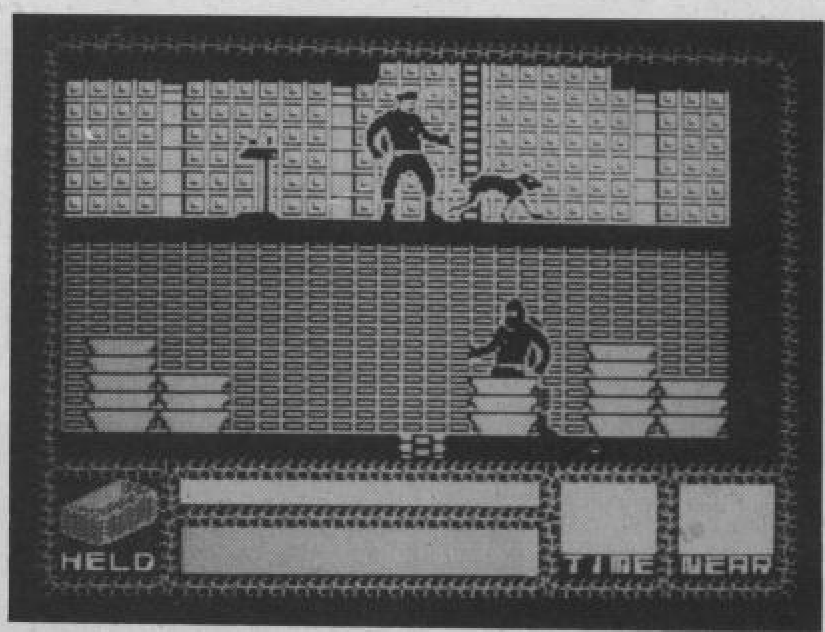
from **Adventure International**. Written by Mike Woodroffe and Brian Howarth, the game is



based on the Fighting Fantasy book of the same title written by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone. With over three hundred locations, the game aims to combine the best of both computer adventuring and fighting fantasy worlds and features "an animated interpretation" of the Fighting Fantasy combat system. Aggie's going to be stapling yet another Jiffy bag for Derek before the day's out. £9.95 for a dose of Fighting Adventure or Adventure Fantasy, take your pick!

A man from **Odin** also visited the office last week, leaving behind his keys and a cassette containing a few screen strings from the follow up to *Nodes of Yesod, Ark of Yesod*. If anything the game looks more attractive than *Nodes*, and this time takes place inside a space ship rather in planetary caverns. Once again it stars Charlie, who has to find and destroy the monolith this time. . . . Released by **Thor**, sister company to the Big O, the game will retail for £8.95 but those of you who decide to buy *Robin O' the Wood* will find there's a £1.00 tear-off coupon in the inlay, which can be used in part exchange.

Another arcade conversion for the Spectrum that will be in the shops in good time for Christmas this year is *Commando*, produced by **Elite** who are justifiably pleased with the results of their programming efforts. Steve Wilcox was in the area a couple of days before I sat down to write this, and dropped into the office with demo versions of the game for both the Commodore and Spectrum — both of which went down very



well with the lounge-lizards from ZZAP! who mis-spent (and still mis-spend whenever the opportunity arises) their youth in arcades.

Apparently the version Steve brought with him wasn't quite finished — but had been on schedule all the way, so should be out in comfortable time to find its way into a few Christmas stockings. A very faithful conversion on the Spectrum, according to Arch Lizard Rignall from ZZAP!, who playtested the demos.

Another last-minute arrival in the office, this time on Microdrive cartridge for a change, was **Durell**'s latest offering in the form of *Saboteur*. From the few moments I had to play it, before rushing back to the keyboard of this boring non-games playing computer, I could work out that it was going to be a lot of fun. To label it as a cross between *WOTEF* and *Impossible Mission* would be unfair, so I won't.

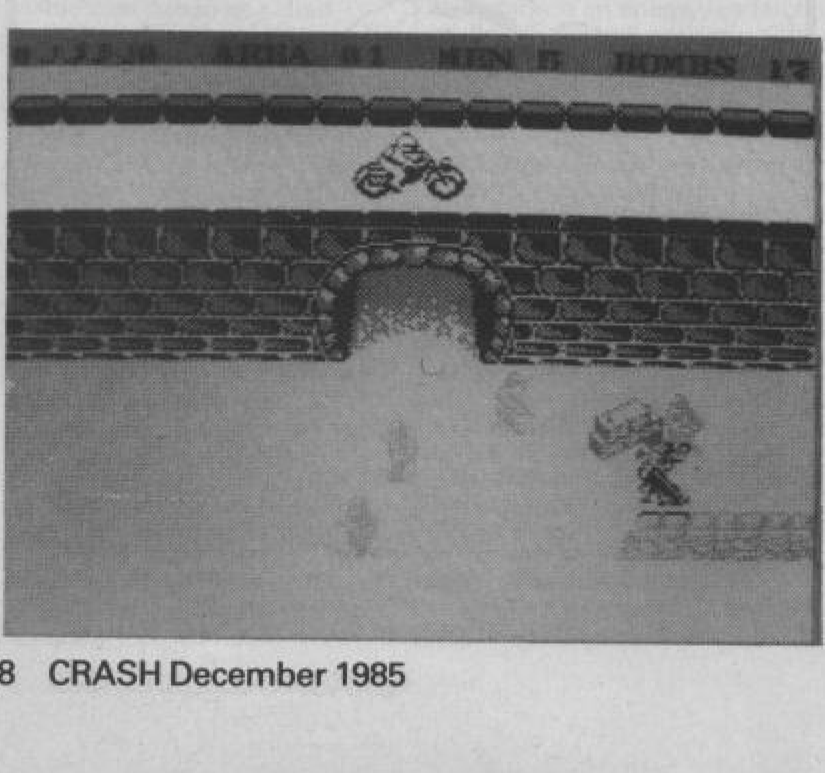
I will reveal, however, that your character is a balaclava'ed fighting man who has to get past guards and nasty dogs as well as video-camera guided anti personnel weapons. You need to find a computer disc and time bomb and to earn maximum points you must escape with the disc after you've set the bomb.

You can find all sorts of weapons to throw at the enemy and can jump, kick and punch like a true ninja on your way to completing your mission. An all action game, by the looks, which ought to go down well.

Early in 1986 (which isn't THAT far away now, as Robin Candy keeps reminding me) **Durell** will be releasing Mike Richardson's latest game *Turbo Esprit* in which you drive a very fast car through city landscapes attempting to head off drug runners.



And with that excitement to look forward to, it's back to the cottage to finish work on my Lookback on 1984 for the Christmas Special and carry on chopping logs for the winter fires. Central heating may be a wonderful thing, but when it's driven by a solid fuel boiler you have to work for your comfort!



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THUNDER BIRDS

Producer: Firebird
Retail price: **£3.95**
Language: **machine code**
Authors: **J Cain and K Moughtin.**

A team of Egyptologists have accidently been trapped within the deep recesses of a newly discovered ancient maze-tomb. Their oxygen is rapidly running out and they manage to send out a plea for help on their radio transmitter in the hope that someone, somewhere will here their cry for help. Well someone does. Their call is received by Thunderbird Five, orbiting high in the stratosphere and it is John Tracy, member of International Rescue who hears the Egyptologists' message. The information is soon relayed to International Rescue's base and Thunderbirds One and Two are scrambled into action.

This is where you come in. After sitting through a multi channel rendition of the Thun derbirds theme, the game starts on a menu screen, where you choose the equipment you wish Thunderbird 2 to carry. Thunderbird 2 can move a forty ton payload, and you must chose your equipment accordingly. A variety of useful items and equipment is available, including Thunderbird 4, The Mole, weedkiller, earthquake bombs and scanning equipment as well as extra fuel. For each tonne of equipment you take you forfeit a hundred of the two thousdand points you start with. Moving a pointer labelled select against the name of an item and pressing fire causes it to be loaded into Thunderbird 2.

The action flips to the launch screen once you've loaded up. In a blaze of pixels Thunderbird One takes off, followed by Thunderbird 2 — unless it's overloaded in which case the overweight message is flashed up and some of the equipment chosen has to be replaced.

The Egyptian tomb is split into many rooms, each bordered and split into a maze with character wide squares. Both Thunderbird One and Thunderbird Two are in the tomb, though you can only control one at a time. The ships move in the four basic joystick directions with the control being switched between the two via the fire button.

The idea of the game is to pass through the mazes to reach and rescue the scientists. The trouble is, some of the passages are blocked with coloured slabs of stone and others are not wide enough to allow Thunderbird Two to pass. Blocks can be moved by nudging then with the craft. While red blocks can be shifted by either ship, Blue blocks can only be moved by Thunderbird One while green ones only respond to Thunderbird Two. At times the two ships will have to co-operate closely to clear a path. A limiting factor introduced to make the game a bit more difficult is the inability to swap control when the ships are on adjacent screens: you have to be two screens away or on the same sheet as the other Thunderbird to change control.



The swimming pool. Pretty start screen for the puzzling THUNDERBIRDS game from Firebird. Not a trivial task, to plot your way through the underground maze of the game proper

Throughout the game when you come onto a sheet where a piece of the equipment you've chosen to bring can be used the relevant machines comes automatically into action.

Other little problems confront you later in the game — it's not all block moving and passage clearing — there's water to be passed and insects to be bypassed to mention just a couple of hazards held in store but there's also some treasure to be collected if you're in the mood. All the time you're in flight, fuel is being used, and while there are supplies to be found in the tomb, it's quite possible to run out.... It's quite possible to get stuck on a screen, with the way forward blocked — so you can save a game position out and reload later if you think you're about to make a fatal mistake.

CRITICISM

● **'Though Thunderbirds is quite an enjoyable logic game I must admit to being disappointed — the Thunderbirds series could have given rise to a really brilliant game. As it stands,** Thunderbirds **is an original, but ultimately simple game. Not a bad idea, but nothing exceptional. The graphics move poorly and don't look too wonderful. The music is very good though and gives a surprisingly accurate rendition of the Thunderbirds theme music. I don't think this game is really worth of Firebird's Super Silver label although it can be quite enjoyable.'**

● 'Thunderbirds *is a bit of a let down for me. I had imagined a fantastic game of really high quality, and this didn't live up to my expectations. The graphics are large and nicely animated but they're a little primitive; there's a nice tune but it tends to get on your nerves after a while. I enjoyed playing* Thunderbirds *for a while, but it got a bit boring, solving the same kind of puzzles continually.'*

● 'It's a shame really — this game almost loses out because of the name it's got to live up to. *Thunderbirds*, the game, has some nice touches, like the title screen and music and general scenario, all of which tie it in with the telly programs — but what on earth are Thunderbirds One and Two doing flying round inside a giant Egyptian Tomb? Solving puzzles, that's what pal. Neat puzzles, tricky puzzles, but not Thunderbirds are Go puzzles. It's almost a waste of a name this one — little more than the shape of the ships and the theme tune ties it into the TV series. In its own right, though, not a bad little game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston.
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: not always in the best of taste!
Graphics: large graphics that avoid colour clash but are a bit chunky
Sound: excellent multi-channel tune, very good indeed.
Skill levels: 1
Screens:
General rating: a good game for puzzle and logic problem enthusiasts

Use of computer	**65%**
Graphics	**62%**
Playability	**69%**
Getting started	**71%**
Addictive qualities	**66%**
Value for money	**67%**
Overall	**64%**

ZOOT

Producer: Bug Byte
Retail price: **£2.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Zip**

If you have never heard a computer talking 'Scratch' then *Zoot* could offer you a new experience. As soon as the the game has loaded you are greeted with a bit of verbal which, though quite intelligible, defies the confines of the written word.

Zoot is a fairly large, cumbersome sort of a chap. His passion, we are told, is playing marbles but he's lost them down a drain. Well Zoot does what any devotee would do — he follows them. So begin the adventures of Zoot and his friend Zip.

Life past the drain cover isn't at all what you might expect. In order for Zoot to recover his marbles he must make his way through eleven caverns, and each one demands the performance of a specific task. On the first screen you are greeted by the Dumb Goopas. You know they're dumb because the instructions say so; you are also told to move Zoot about the cavern bashing each one. Goopas don't like being bashed, so as soon as you hit them they explode and die.

Moving about the cavern is a complicated business. What you see is four platform levels, with each level is divided into a total of eight separate segments or gaps. You guide Zoot left or right along a platform until he meets an obstruction or comes to a gap in the path. If there is a section

missing from the platform Zoot can still move: he squats down, grins, and flies one complete segment across the gap. There's no way Zoot can cross a gap two or more sections wide, however.

Zoot can also pilot platform segments downwards providing there is a section below him to land on which is free from obstructions. If there are no segments below Zoot in the column, he will cycle round the top of the screen. When he travels vertically, Zoot claps one hand to his eyes and looks distinctly worried! No wonder — if Zoot moves a segment down when it is the only segment in the column, then he meets a sticky end: if there isn't platform left for him to land on, he loses a life.

Each cavern in the game is, in effect, a giant sliding puzzle and the puzzle element in the game becomes clear by the time you are into the second screen. The task here is not simply to go round biffing the creatures but to trap them on single platform segments so they cannot move. This takes careful planning as it's very easy for Zoot himself to become trapped. Other screens involve collecting marbles while dodging the flying Zip (who can be a help as well as a hindrance), collecting or punching bells, removing all of the sections and picking up as many points from as many ledges as you can work your way round. The last five screens require you to perform a combination of the tasks encountered in the first six screens.

The creatures, or Mankins, which Zoot encounters on his journey vary in their own little ways. The Goopas are dumb while the Bodkins are shy. The one called Cheeky is indestructible when his tongue is out. Others like Spike, Uggy, Bogie and Grimbo have their own nasty habits. For most of the time the Mankins are pretty harmless but they can deprive Zoot of one of his four lives if he comes into contact with them. When Zoot loses a life he must negotiate the screen again. The same is true if Zoot miscalculates his movement and attempts to move down onto a section where one does not exist. If the Gods are smiling down on Zoot he might get the opportunity to collect extra lives or even an object called an IDC tablet. Picking up the tablet seems to remove random sections and may benefit Zoot by trapping some of the Mankins for him.



Lost your marbles? ZOOT has, and it's up to you to help the poor fellow get them back. Blobby nasties living on platforms stand in his way in this game-with-a-difference from Bug Byte

CRITICISM

● **'Zoot is a pretty boring chap. Although the graphics are large, clear and jolly the game was altogether too slow for my liking. The theme of the game is both clever and original but isn't involved enough to fall comfortably into the puzzle game category, while the lack of speed bars it from being classified as an arcade game. A cheerful and jolly game with little substance to it, really.'**

● *'Another game from the new budget software label, Bug-Byte — as with the rest this one is quite well finished with nice graphics and sound. Zoot's even got a bit of speech included. Generally, though, I felt there wasn't much of a game behind it all. The graphics are large and jolly and the sound is satisfying. As for the game itself . . . I played it for about half an hour before I sussed out what I was supposed to be doing! It grows on you after a while though, and I found myself quite enjoying it after several goes.'*

● 'Though I was quite impressed with the style of graphics, I wasn't that overjoyed by the game. If it had been a bit better implemented, perhaps a little faster or a bit less jerky then maybe it would have been received a bit better. Presentation wise I was very impressed — the title screen with accompanying scratch track was amazing — but when it comes down to it, it's not a bad game, but not a remarkable one either, even for a budget label.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: O/P left/right, A for down, Q to punch
Joystick: Kempston and Interface II
Keyboard play: fair
Use of colour: simple
Graphics: witty and jolly, but very slow
Sound: superb speech synthesis at the beginning and end
Skill levels: one
Screens: eleven
General rating: cheap and cheerful, fun for a while

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	60%
Playability	53%
Getting started	55%
Addictive qualities	57%
Value for money	65%
Overall	**59%**

DOGS-BODY

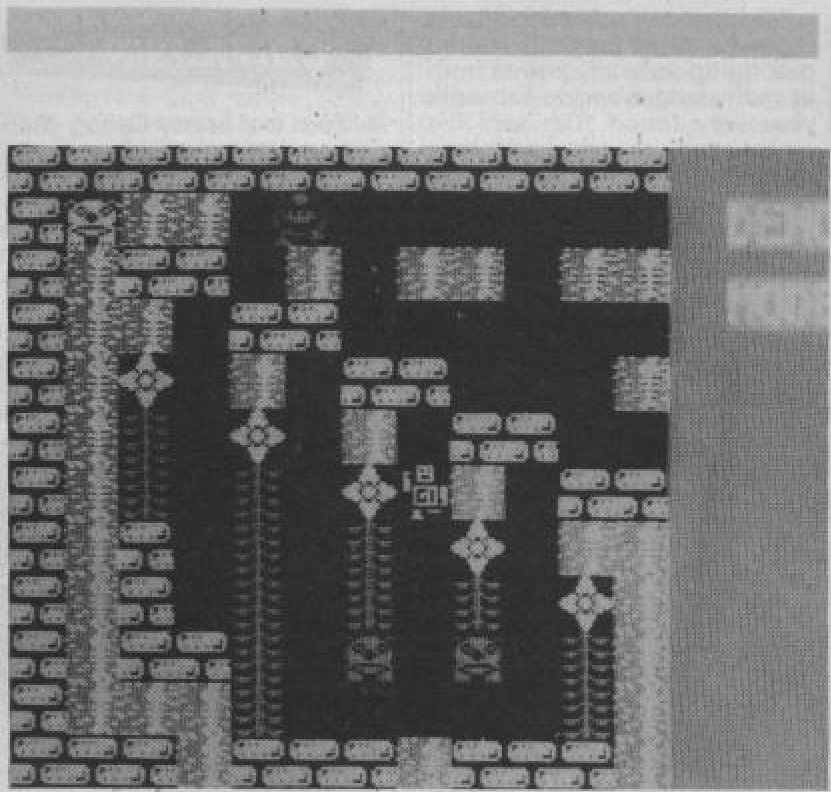
Producer: Bug Byte
Retail price: **£2.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author:

This game is of the 'trapped in cavern and need to collect all the objects to get out' type. Dr Dogmush has carried out a plan of despicable daring and kidnapped 192 puppies, and stashed them away in his lair. He's now planning to carry out vile genetic experiments to turn them from cute and playful puppies that could easily be used to advertise toilet paper, into vicious killer dogs that will go for the throat as soon as say "woof". Animal liberationists, determined not to take any of this lying down, have sent in special agent Dogsbody. Dogsbody is a mission hardened operative, with skills honed for this type of mission. Dogsbody, by the way, is a dog.

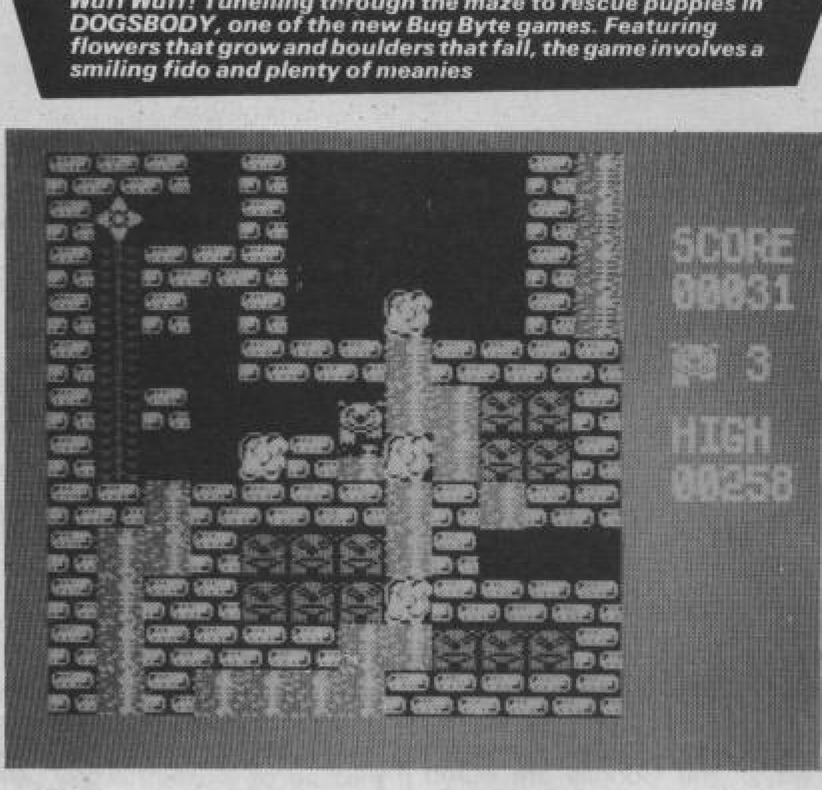
The puppies are incarcerated within the Dr Dogmush's stronghold. Built upon red sandstone, the caverns are patrolled by a number of the doctor's robotic denizens. There are fifty beings guarding the maze, each of whose touch is deadly to agent Dogsbody. Also, the nasties aren't stupid. They track and trace Dogsbody even when they're not present on the screen with him.

Some of the corridors and pathways are blocked with soil: this can be eaten away by Dogsbody but is impassable to a the stronghold's guards. All dogsbody needs to do to clear a pathway is travel over the soil, and it's automatically eaten away. There are also impassable boulders scattered around the mad doctor's lair, and they're generally supported by soil. Eat away the soil and the boulder falls down, rather like those in *Boulderdash*. If Dogsbody is fortunate enough to land a boulder on one of the baddies, it'll then get squashed — but it'll be reincarnated and teleported back to it's start position.

Dogsbody is able to move around in the up, down, left and right directions. Standing still he just pants and looks miserably our of the screen, but once on the move a grin hits his face as his little legs jog up and down. As he crosses over the screen boundary a new cavefull of nasties flicks into view. There are twenty five such screens, each sheet covering nearly the whole screen. A majority of the maze is made up from bricked walls, impenetrable to special agent Dogsbody, who has to find his way round the tortuous caverns.



Wuff Wuff! Tunelling through the maze to rescue puppies in DOGSBODY, one of the new Bug Byte games. Featuring flowers that grow and boulders that fall, the game involves a smiling fido and plenty of meanies



Extra obstacles added include the mega quick growing flo wers, sitting innocently about the maze with their heads jammed against some soil. If you eat away the earth above the flowers' heads they quickly grow up as far as they can. The trouble is, flowers block pathways in the maze, so you can end up blocking yourself in. Horticulture can also be handy if a fiend is hot on your trail and you want to bar its way.

The puppies are inanimate and are little replicas of Dogsbody. For some reason they constantly glow and shimmer until you run over them. They are then rescued and duly disappear, and you collect points for rescuing puppies and for eating earth away.

CRITICISM

● '**Though quite nice in conception and execution,** Dogsbody **falls down because of a couple of flaws. The main problem that ultimately make things a bit difficult is the way the error detection works. Sometimes you can walk through Dr Dogmush's robotic fiends without coming to harm, and other times you can't. Things can really get confusing! Some of the game ideas are good — but the whole game maintains a slight resemblance to** Boulderdash: **the earth and rocks seem to behave in exactly the same way.** Dogsbody **would have been greatly improved had the main screen scrolled about Special Agent Dogsbody — as it is, it's just all to easy to rush blindly off the edge of the screen and cop it. Overall all though, a nice little game that just wasn't programmed too professionally.**

● *'This game must take the biscuit for cheat bugs of the year! Once a boulder's dropped on you, if you're careful you can walk through it; which can also be done with the flowers. If you bought* Rockford's Riot *and liked it, then I'd recommend this one because the graphics are much better, but the sound does tend to get on your nerves. This is the sort of game that would appeal to the younger Spectrum owner who hasn't got that much money. Personally I'd rather be playing the other new Bug Byte game,* Zoot*.'*

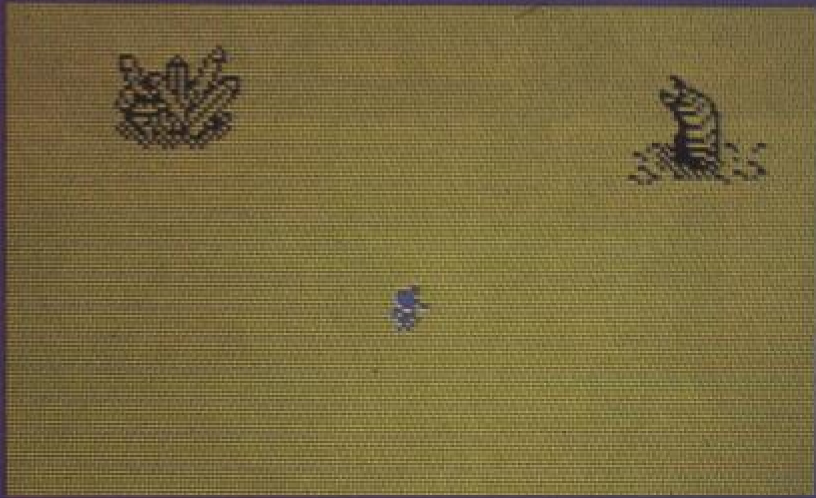
● 'This one has qualities about it that remind me of the popular arcade game *Mr Do* . Although it is a lot more involved and it doesn't really look the same, it just has the same feel about it. The graphics are large and colourful and nicely animated. Unfortunately, these large and colourful graphics mean that there are a lot of attribute problems. Sound is not well used but it does its job adequately. There are several things about this one that annoy me, the main being the way that you only die sometimes when you are touched by a nasty. This can be a little disconcerting. Generally, I wouldn't recommend this one but you can't really go wrong for the cheap price that its being marketed for.

COMMENTS

Control keys: P up, L down, Z left, X right, SPACE to abort/exit demo mode, Fire/Enter to restart game
Joystick: Interface 2 and Kempston
Keyboard play: a bit sticky at times.
Use of colour: no attribute clash because of large graphics, though colours could have been better chosen
Graphics: nicely animated, though rather bland
Sound: nothing special
Skill levels: one
Screens: 25 screens
General rating: a pleasant game, slightly flawed by a few blunders

Use of computer	52%
Graphics	69%
Playability	65%
Getting started	62%
Addictive qualities	60%
Value for money	69%
Overall	**65%**

C•R•I•T•I•C•A•L



You're the Little Blue Man With a Jetpack in the centre of the screen. A nasty sandworm has just popped its head up close to a quartzite rocky outcrop. CRITICAL MASS from Durell.

CRITICAL MASS

Producer: Durell
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Simon Francis**

Once again, your mission to is save life, the universe and everything. Alien forces have captured an anti matter conversion plant which supplies power to colonists in a planetary system. The aliens are threatening to turn the anti-matter plant onto 'self-destruct' — which would wipe out the entire planetary system and a couple of neighbouring stars as well — unless they receive unconditional surrender. Unconditional surrender is a fate worse than death, so it's up to you to travel across the surface of the asteroid on which the power plant is sited, infiltrate the alien enemy's positions and disable the anti-matter converter before it achieves Critical Mass.

You are in control of a rocket-propelled hover craft with high speed strike attack capabilities, according to the armaments manufacturer's sales blurb. The craft doesn't make contact with the ground, and thus avoids seismic detection, and is equipped with a powerful laser device. It's defended with a force field which protects the ship against collisions or alien attacks — but every collision with the force field drains a little more energy, and the field will eventually implode, destroying the ship if energy gets too low. Your energy status is displayed on a horizontal bar to the left of the screen and is replenished if you can avoid bumping into things or firing for a while. Too many collisions, or indeed too much rapid firing, and your ship turns into a collection of bouncing pixels . . .

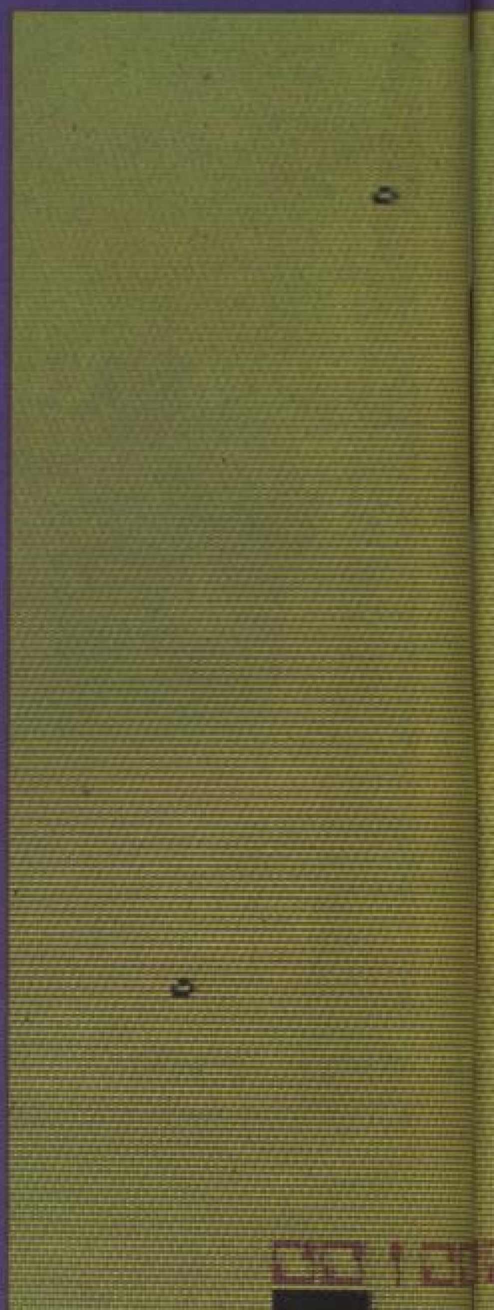
For the benefit of less skillful pilots, a further protection device detects when your craft is about to implode, and ejects you before the event. All is not lost, however, for your character then uses the emergency jet pack to travel to a dome shaped energy pod where a new ship can be found. On the journey, the shipless pilot is unprotected and must avoid contact with rocks and other life forms which drain energy. An indicator, in the form of a large arrow, shows you the direction you should be travelling in, and in this phase you have to try to avoid large sandworm-like nasties that pop up out of the ground.

Your mission is to travel east with all speed, to the power unit. During the early phases of the game you will only encounter alien long distance raiders plus unfused mines, but as you progress through the zones you will encounter increasingly hostile opposition including fused and guided mines. Once you have travelled through all of the zones you will find yourself near the power plant. This is protected by a score of nasties such as amorphous clouds of molecular disorientation. To enter the power plant you will have to disable the force field gates by shooting the front of the turret that is between them. This is not easy and with the addition of the clouds you are likely to end up spinning off into the distance.

Once inside the plant you will find yourself being drawn into an energy beam — this you must destroy by shooting the centre of the pyramid shaped energy concentrator in the middle of the device. Failure leads to vapourisation for you and your craft.

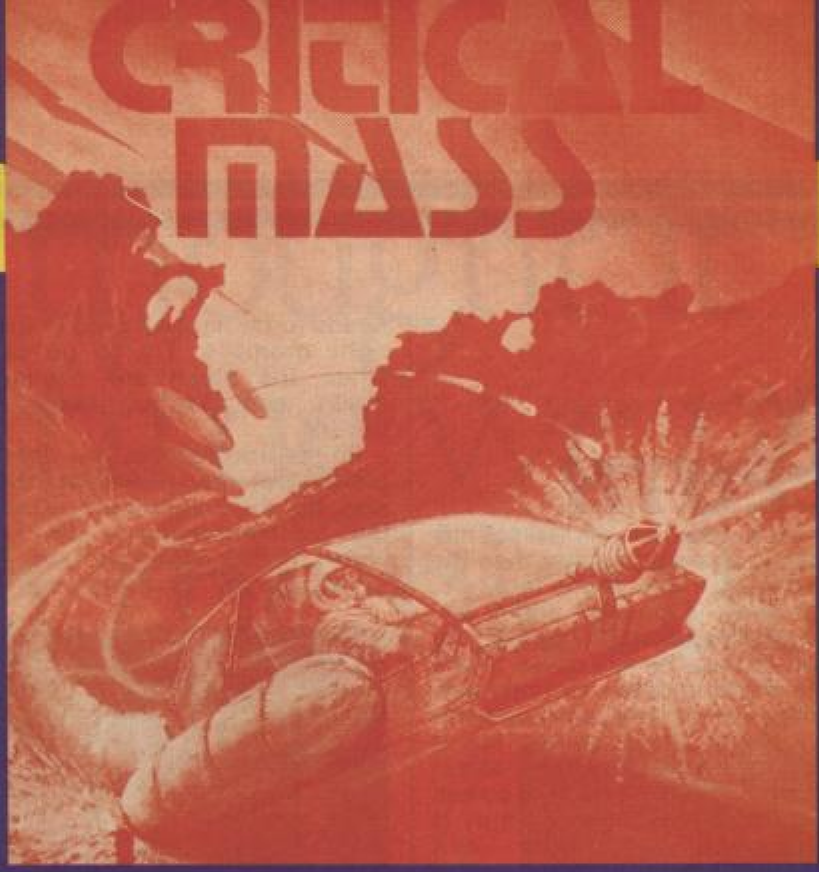
The whole game is played against the clock, which ticks off the time remaining before Critical Mass is achieved. Points are collected for doing away with





M•A•S•S

alien defences on the way to saving the universe.

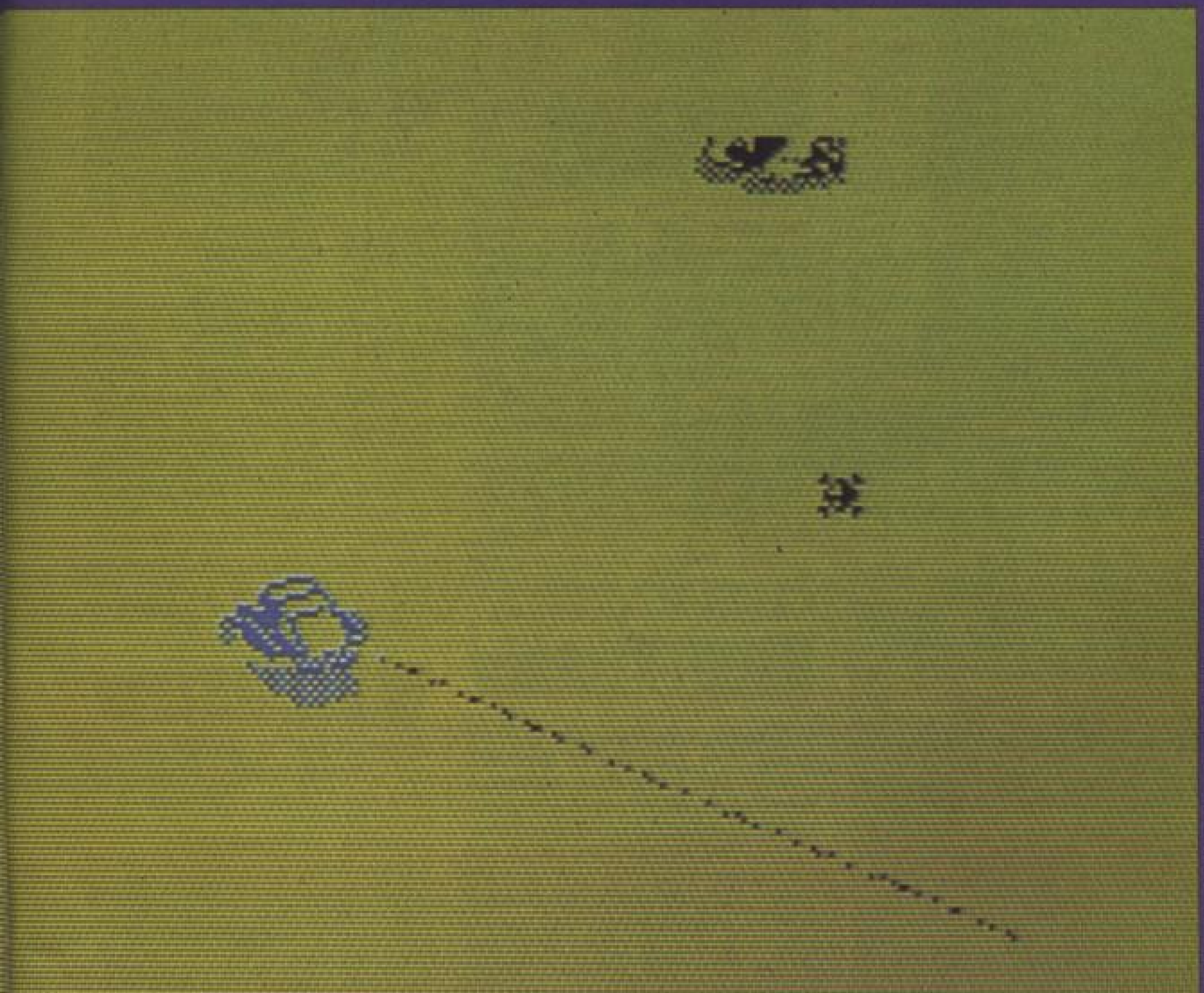


Loosing off your laser in CRITICAL MASS from Durell. Don't be mislead by appearances — the cuddly looking round sponge thing at the bottom of the screen is deadly.

CRITICISM

●**'Remember** Scuba Dive **way back in issue 2 of CRASH? Even then we said that Durell had set new standards in graphics; now they have gone one better and produced a game that has great graphics, good sound and compelling game play.** Critical Mass **takes the form of a fast action shoot em up that is totally addictive. The movement of your craft reminds me very much of Vortex's** Cyclone **where you have to wrestle with the controls when you encounter a problem. The sound is pretty good for a Spectrum with great blowing up effects and a nice tune at the start of the game. The inclusion of an automatic eject is quite a good idea, though the game could have been made a bit more exciting if you had to operate the ejection system yourself. If you're into shoot em ups, then you couldn't do much better than buy this.'**

●*'This struck me as being pretty boring when I first encountered it — a touch of the 'nice graphics, shame about the game syndrome'. On further playing I started to discover things deeper within the game which were highly original and excellent. The graphics on this are of a very high standard, and the scrolling is something of a miracle for a Spectrum. If you like shoot em ups then you can't go wrong with this one, it's one of the best in my memory.'*



●'The music on this game in the opening screens is great but when you start the game the first thing to strike you are the amazing graphics, which are so detailed. The only problem that I could see was that the screen tended to empty at times. Some of the graphics are a touch on the small side, but this doesn't detract from the overall impression of excellence. The thing that really surprised me was the handling of the craft; the inertial effects produced by hitting rocks and firing your laser are wonderful. They are some of the best on any Spectrum game that I've played. Controlling the craft adds an extra dimension to the game that, when combined with the graphics and frantic game play, makes for an excellent game.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X left and right, Q accelerate, A fire, plus definable key option
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2 and Downsway
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: only two colours and black used but attribute problems are avoided
Graphics: good and detailed but at times the screen gets a bit blank
Sound: limited during play but nice tune to start off with
Skill levels: 3
Screens: vast scrolling area
General rating: very good shoot em up that is fast, fun and furious

Use of computer	92%
Graphics	93%
Playability	92%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	90%
Overall	**90%**

GRUMPY GUMPHREY SUPER- SLEUTH

Producer: Gremlin Graphics
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Sean Hollingworth**

Grumpy Gumphrey Supersleuth isn't the first arcade adventure to be set in a department store, but the central character Gumphrey must be the first geriatric hero to star in a computer game!

Poor old Grumpy Gumphrey is definitely the department store's dogsbody. Apart from the fact that he is supposed to be guarding the shop's stock from marauding thieves (he is the Store Detective after all) Grumpy is also set a whole variety of tasks by the mean and moody manager. In between shooting mad, rampant ducks on the ground floor, Grumps has to make tea for his ungrateful boss and cope with a whole host of minor and major emergencies in the store.

Each task has to be completed within a time limit — gametime is relentlessly ticked off by a digital display at the foot of the screen. Failure to complete a task in time results in a summons from the manager. Once summoned, Grumpy has to make his way to the Manager's Office within half an hour to receive a warning letter. If he fails to arrive in time, it's instant dismissal and time for a new game.

The store is crowded with shoppers (and the odd toy soldier), who mill around manically getting in Grumpy's way as he tries to complete his tasks. If any of the characters other than the harmless hippy bump into him, Grumpy is pushed about and may be knocked off his feet — in which case he sits down. While he is sitting down, Grumpy gets closer to his next warning letter — sitting down on the job is frowned on at Mole Bros Stores! A bar at the bottom of the screen indicates how close Grumpy is to his next warning letter — as it gets shorter another missive gets closer. Four letters and he's out of a job.

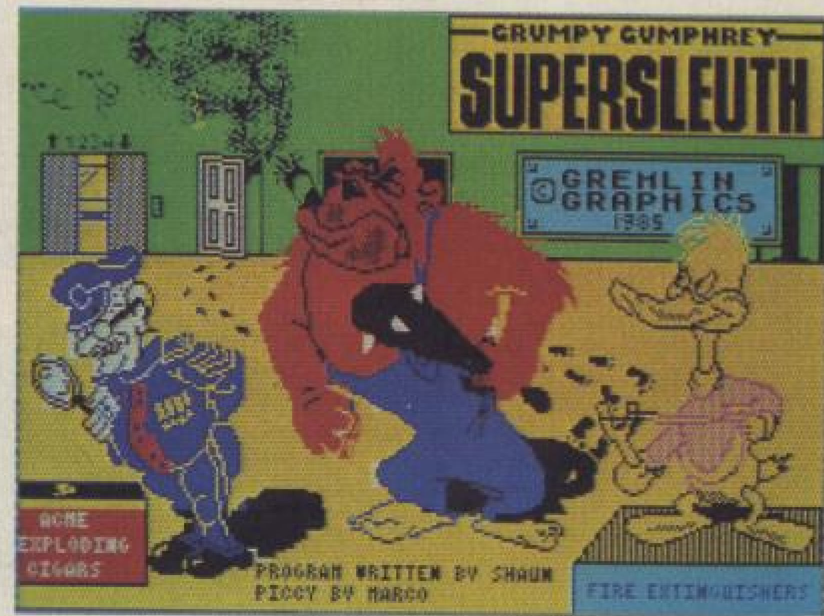
A horizontal message area at the bottom of the screen displays the latest order from on high and is used to remind Grumpy of the next task he needs to complete in order to survive the day. Whenever the Manager calls, he must be obeyed immediately, and the current task put on ice.

There's a variety of objects scattered throughout the store which can be used to help Grumpy in his chores. To pick up an object, Grumpy has to be moved up to it and the pick up key pressed whereupon the object is transferred to his pocket — an area at the bottom right of the screen. Once an object has been picked up it can be dropped, used or knocked out of Grumpy's hands by jostling shoppers.

The Mole Bros. store has four floors, each containing a number of departments selling a wide range of goodies to the shoppers. Grumpy can travel between floors in the lift, pressing the appropriate button to select a level. Watch out for the light switch though! There's also an escalator which travels up and down alternately and needs to be hopped onto at the right moment. Try to go up when the stairs are coming down and Grumpy takes a tumble.

Points are awarded for completing tasks and picking up objects, but the real score is collected by completing a day — worth 10,000 points no less. A whole variety of useful items can be found scattered around the weird and wacky store in which the action takes place. It's up to you to work out how they can best be used to assist Gumphrey in his campaign to avoid the sack.

If you don't succeed in completing all the tasks in one working day — from 9.00 in the morning till 5.30 in the evening — then there's always another day . . . providing Grumps hasn't had his cards!



GRUMPY GUMPHREY has a tough time in his department store — rampant ducks, escaped gorillas and a demanding manager to cope with in an 9 to 5 day.



Taking a rest, GUMPHREY in the confectionery department — for once not being jostled by manic customers. Sitting down on the job brings a written warning and the sack closer, however . . .

CRITICISM

● **'Graphically, this game is very good. The characters are well drawn and animated, although there are a lot of attribute problems. The sound is not very exciting. I didn't get very far in the game, and didn't find it very playable, but I can see potential in it for people who want to persist and get to grips with the game. On the whole I think there are too many games of this type on the market already — and this is not the best of them.'**

● *'Another long overdue game — well worth the wait, though. The graphics reminded me of Thor's* Jack and the Beanstalk *type games, but much improved. The animation of Gumphrey is smooth and flicker free and the whole presentation of the game is very professional — a credit to Sean Hollingworth. This is an enjoyable game which I found easy to get into. While this game will mainly appeal to arcade adventurers, it's very good and well worth getting if you like the type.'*

● 'After spending a bit of time guiding Gumphrey round the store, I realised the the idea behind the game had something in common with *Technician Ted*, with the different tasks to be completed in set time limits. Graphically the game's impressive, especially the way Gumphrey walks convincingly in front of and behind certain objects, creating a realistic 3D effect. Considering the amount of colours on screen the lack of attribute clash was quite impressive. There's a lot of nice little touches — lots of thought and attention to detail behind this one. I loved the way all the clocks in the store kept gametime for instance. Overall a nice little game and though it may not appeal to everyone, I really liked it.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q Left, W right, P up, L down, Space fire, D drop/pick up, T re-read message, S scroll objects
Joystick: Interface 2 and Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive, well placed keys
Use of colour: bright and cheerful
Graphics: interesting 3D effect owing to masking of characters
Sound: walking and 'resting' noises, spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 39
General rating: a game with lots of attention to detail and plenty of humour that should please arcade adventurers

Use of computer	84%
Graphics	90%
Playability	84%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**86%**

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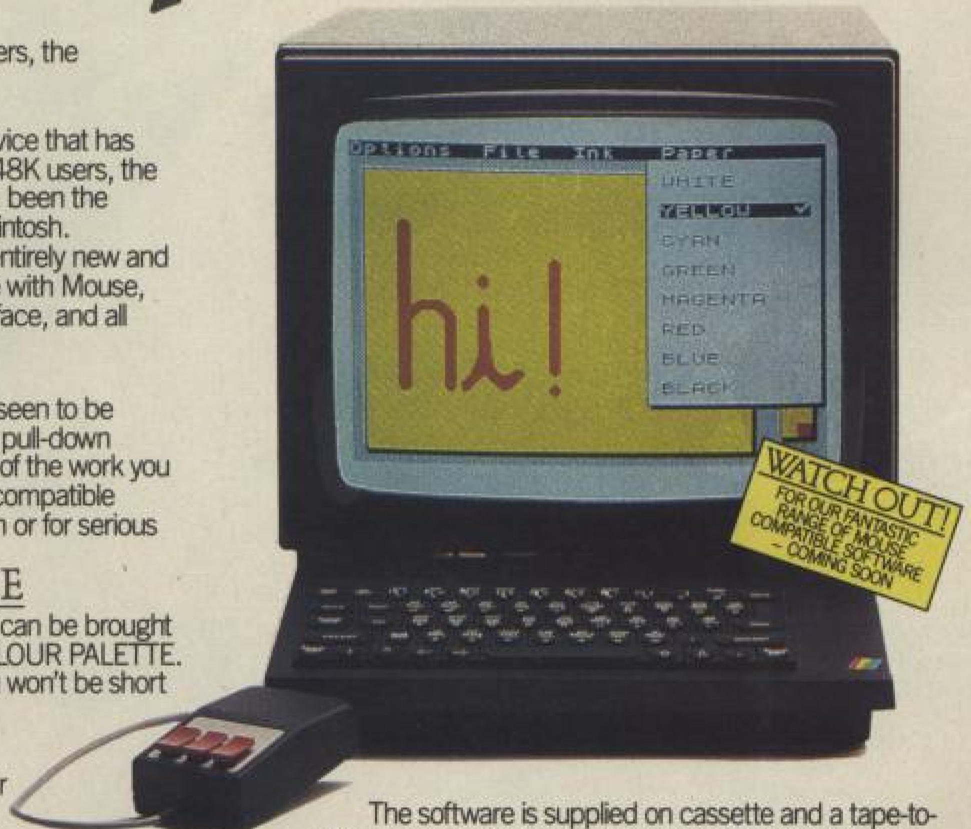
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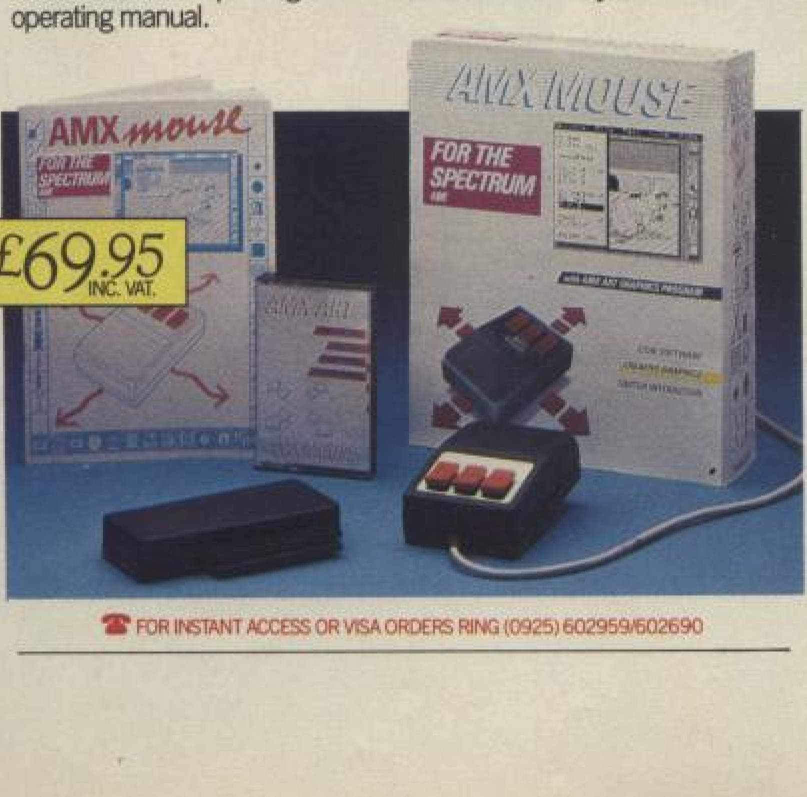
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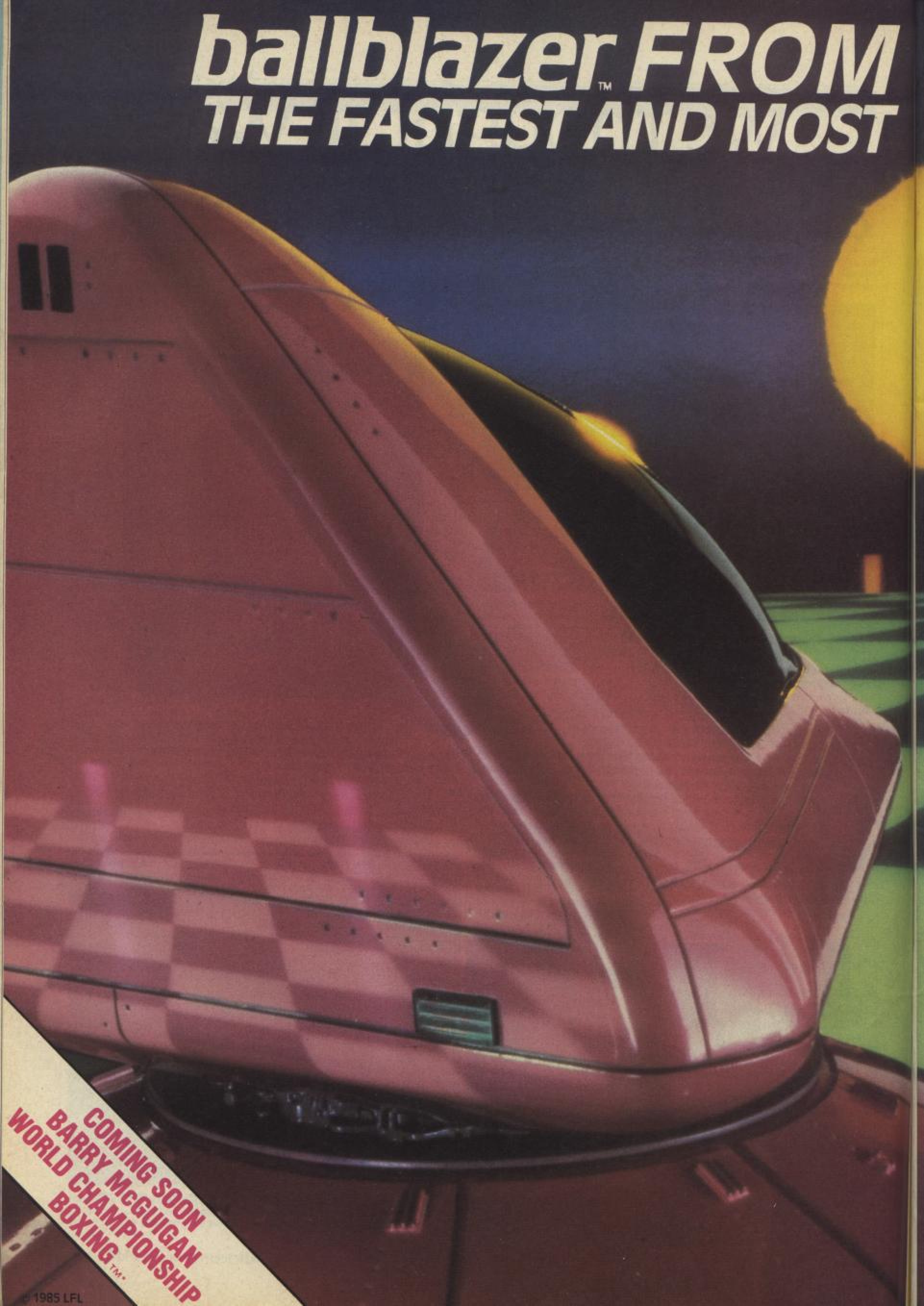
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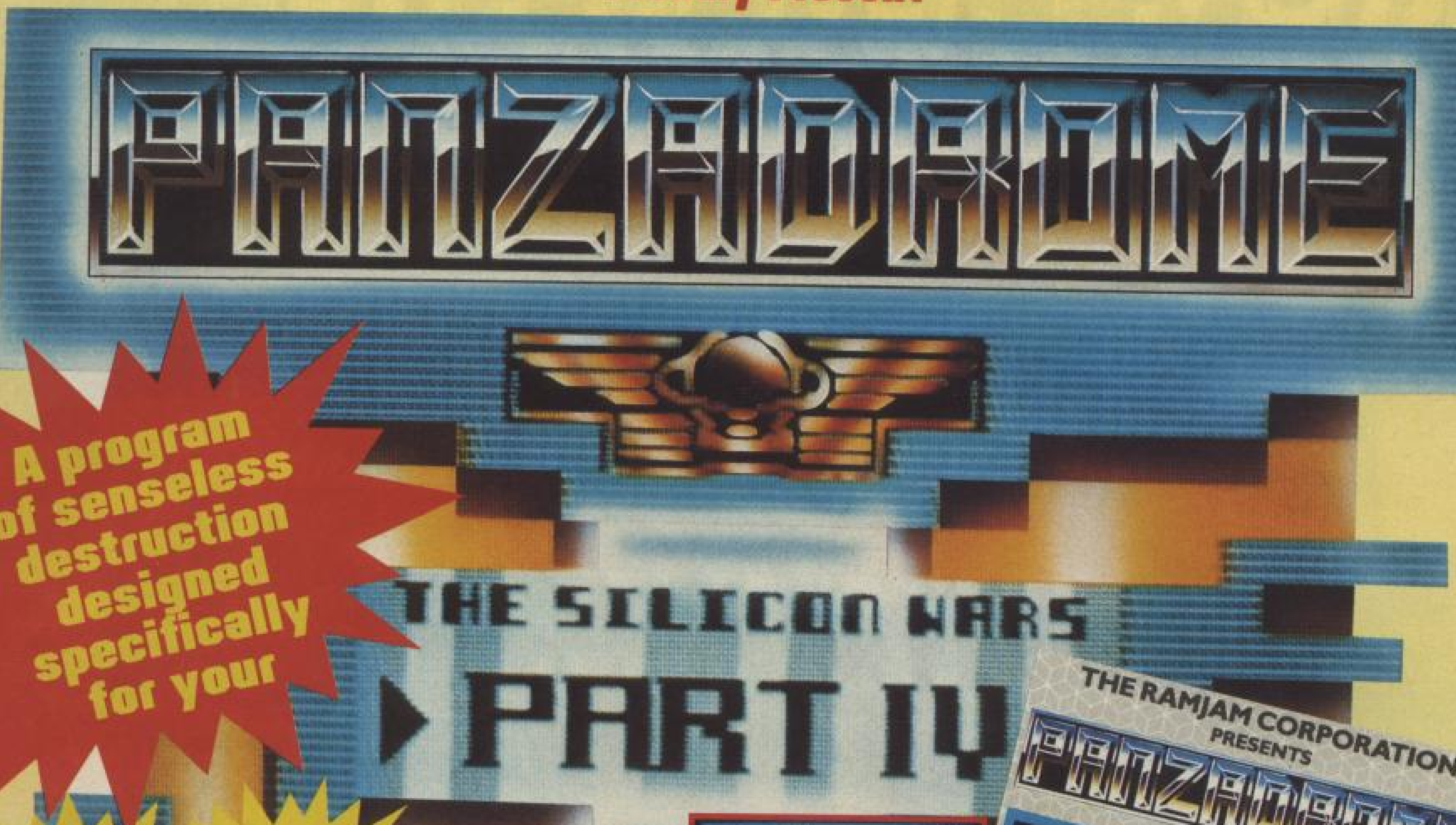
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Producer: Firebird
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Amad**

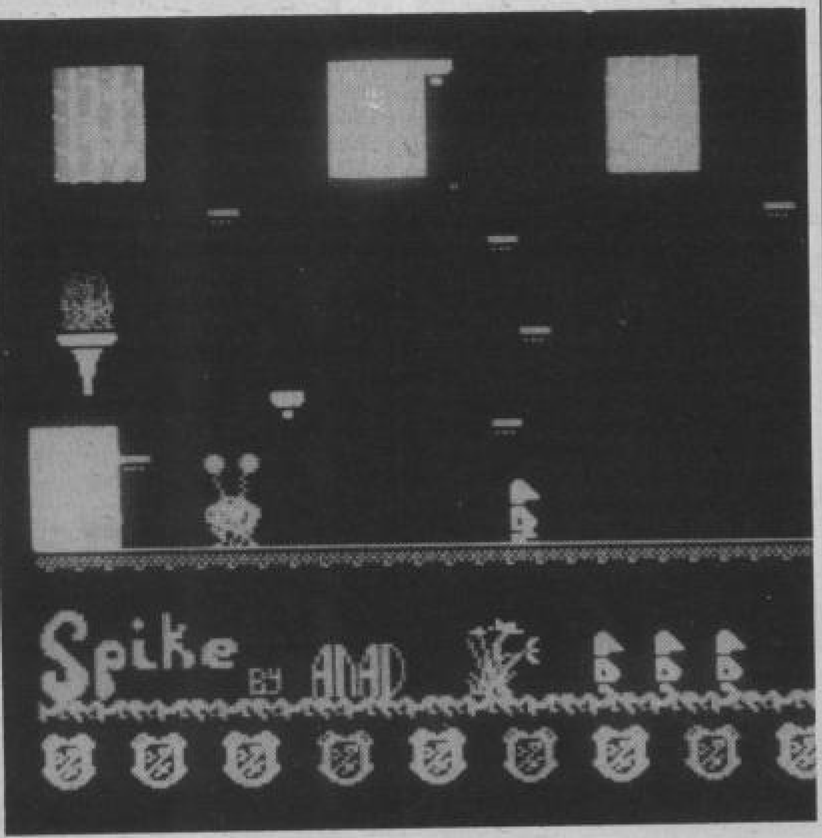
The platform game is far from dead. *Spike* is the latest offering from Firebird in their budget Silver range, and the game is filled with ledges and platforms to leap between as you help star of the game, Spike, to make his way through the caverns of the Golden Dream World.

Spike is on a quest to find the Dream Sphere and then lead it to the Hall of Dreams where he can swop it for a reward of his choice and thus finish the game. As is always the case in such affairs, each cavern contains at least one Guardian of The Sphere, or mobile nasty whose only purpose is to remove a life from the intruder. Other static hazards, including fires and sharp pointy bits are scattered around the caverns and have to be circumvented.

Each screen has only one entrance and one exit, so you have to move through the game sequentially. The caverns are linked by corridors, and the screens are drawn *Manic Miner* fashion.

Spike himself is a tiny little guy with a pointed nose and round-ed stomach who scampers around the caves very quickly indeed, with his little legs spinning round in a blur. Apart from tucking his tootsies up into his body when he leaps, Spike performs no other animated trick and is without arms. This presents no problem, however, as the Golden Sphere will follow his once found and need not be carried. Once he's found the sphere, it can still escape — so the return journey needs to be conducted in a sober manner, without too many jolts to sever the link between the Sphere and Spike.

The caverns contain a variety of hidden switches, some of which reveal hidden platforms essential for Spike's safe progress through the chamber. Others contain keys which open doors for the little chap, hastening him on his way. At the bottom of the screen is a row of reserve Spikes — when the active Spike loses a life a replacement marches promptly onto the screen and begins at the start of the cavern where the accident took place. There are only five little Spikes in a team, however, and once they're played out it's time for a new game.



SPIKE meets an bug eyed monster in Firebird's game of the same name. SPIKE not Bug Eyed Monster, fools

CRITICISM

● 'Spike **is another in the never ending stream of arcade adventures. My main criticism with** Spike **is that he is too small — you would have thought that software companies would have learned by now that the public like big colourful characters. Never mind the colour clashes — that's why** Wally **was so successful.** Spike **is a very highly polished game, even right down to the excellent scream when the guy gets hit by a guardian. The constant clicking when Spike walks does become annoying after a while. If you're not a fan of** Manic Miner **type games or arcade adventures, then this one is unlikely to change your mind. But for £1.99, you can't complain.'**

● *'There are some very sloppy parts to this otherwise very well programmed game. You can sometimes see where a platform is going to appear by walking behind it. It will cut off part of Spike until you move out of the way. Also, the very fast movement prevents fine manouevres unless a great deal of practice is put in. Some of the leaps needed have to be almost pixel perfect. The rest of the game I thought was very unimpressive. Far too much like* Manic Miner *and not enough new features. At £1.99, some will think this is good buy, but I find it a poor excuse for an outdated idea.'*

● 'The game provides some fun — especially if it's a while since you played this kind of thing. It's old hat but harmless, unpretentious fun. I don't see why all the awful plots have to be put behind this kind of game. They add nothing and are often embarrassingly incongruous. I didn't mind playing this game and just for something different, I wouldn't mind buying it — but no more inane plots, please!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: V left, B right, Space jump
Joystick: keyboard only
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: limited
Graphics: detailed, but small
Sound: one very good effect, otherwise mildly annoying
Skill levels: one
Screens:
General rating: dated format, but pleasant all the same

Use of computer	**49%**
Graphics	**50%**
Playability	**59%**
Getting started	**81%**
Addictive qualities	**60%**
Value for money	**71%**
Overall	**61%**

CHICKEN CHASE

Producer: Firebird
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£2.50**
Language: **Machine Code**

Sacre bleu! Well yes, in a way it is blue. The private life of the local henhouse explodes onto your screen in this rather unusual, but definitely tongue in cheek offering from Firebird.

Set in a henhouse with two doors to the outside world on the left and right walls, a central "bedroom" and two nesting platforms against the back wall, the idea of the game is to keep Madam Chicken satisfied by ... hmm ... well ... ahem ... doing what Cockerels are best at. All this takes place in her boudouis BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR. For every ... hmm ... thingybob ... you do (takes a few seconds you know) she'll produce a fertile egg and a heart appears at the top of the screen.

When you feel you've had enough, leave her room and Madam will follow a moment later, make a bee line for the nesting boxes and lay the same amount of eggs that you ... um ... leftgooseberrybushesunder herbed.

It is here that the game now gets rather frantic. You see all the nasties that loaf around the farm - racoons, snakes, porcupines, rats and the like start to come into the henhouse and try to break the eggs. If you don't peck the bad guys (this sends them away) in time then they'll break the eggs and madam won't be too pleased to say the least: in fact she'll come out and biff you with her handbag. You've got three lives available and you lose one each time your wife biffs you.

Just to make life a little more difficult, as well as guarding the eggs you've got to enter madam's little room and give her something to help her produce more eggs. As the eggs hatch the chicks rush down and go into their Mummy's little room. If there aren't any more eggs and the last chick disappears into your birdy wife's boudoir, then she'll get very angry and give you more of the handbag treatment. So there's always got to be at least one egg on the nest waiting to hatch at any one time

All this hectic exercise makes you pretty tired out. As you get more and more tired you begin to slow down - a big disadvantage if you're to catch those beastly baddies. Luckily there's plenty of grain lying around which you can peck up to keep you fit and energetic. Occasionally worms which stick their heads out of the ground. Peck these up and you'll be truly rejuvenated.

You score points according to how long you manage to keep all the eggs safe and madam happy. Extra lives can be gained throughout the game and later on, when the going gets frantic, you certainly need them!

CRITICISM

● 'Chicken Chase **appeared on te Commodore quite a while ago and received a warm welcome, not just because of it's sauciness, as it is in fact a great little game. Rushing round with all the different factors - your energy situation, madam and the baddies demanding your attentions makes the game very frantic and enjoyable to play. The graphics are good, smooth and fast and the game has a nice feel about it. The fact that it's a mere £2.50 makes it even more enjoyable!'**

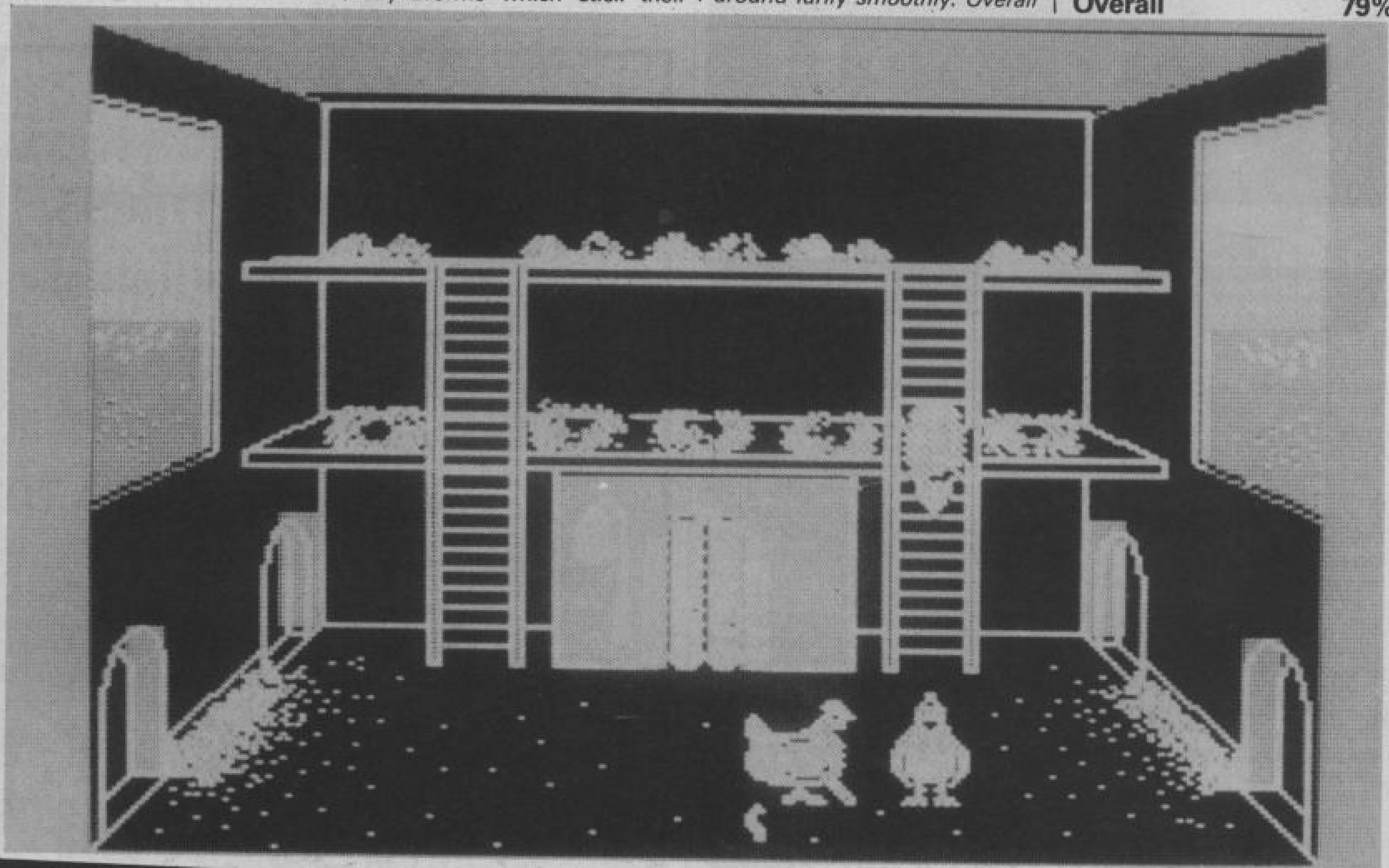
● *'Quite an original game this, a real change in style for Firebird's budget range. The scenario is a mite bit base but to play* Chickin' Chase *is fun. Keeping your time split between the several different tasks can be difficult and certainly the challenge is constant. Graphicswise,* Chickin' Chase *is quite competent, the monochromatic sprites moving around farily smoothly. Overall an above average offering for a below average price.'*

● 'Ooh La La. Isn't it risque? A daft little game really, but lots of fun to play and about as offensive as a wet Wednesday. Not the most brain straining in terms of strategy or the most demanding in terms of arcade action but a neat idea, with some tidy graphics and enjoyable gameplay. There's plenty of things to keep in balance — the life of a real-life rooster must be tough it the game models reality! For the price, not one to be missed.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 5 left, 8 right, 6 down, 7 up, 0 peck also redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: great!
Graphics: big and jolly
Sound: nice tunes and effects
Skill levels: gets progressively harder to survive
Screens: one
General rating: cheap and saucy little number, but great.

Use of computer	**81%**
Graphics	**78%**
Playability	**79%**
Getting started	**84%**
Addictive qualities	**78%**
Value for money	**86%**
Overall	**79%**



Bug Byte lives on. BOMBER BOB is the caped hero who has to sproing around the shop defusing explosive devices while keeping a look out for nasty doobries out to get him. A superhero's lot is not an easy one

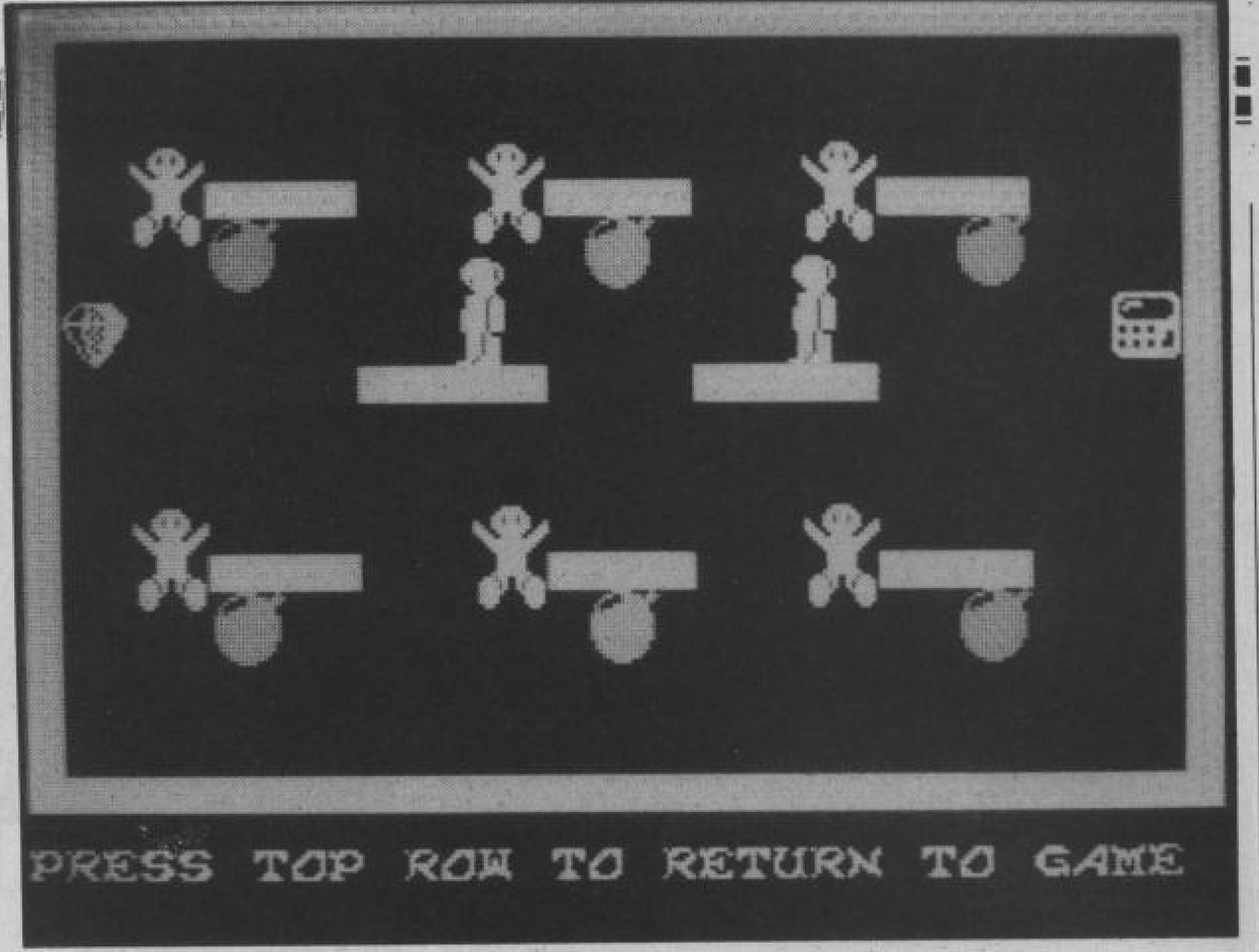
BOMBER BOB

Producer: Bug Byte
Retail price: **£2.95**
Language: **machine code**

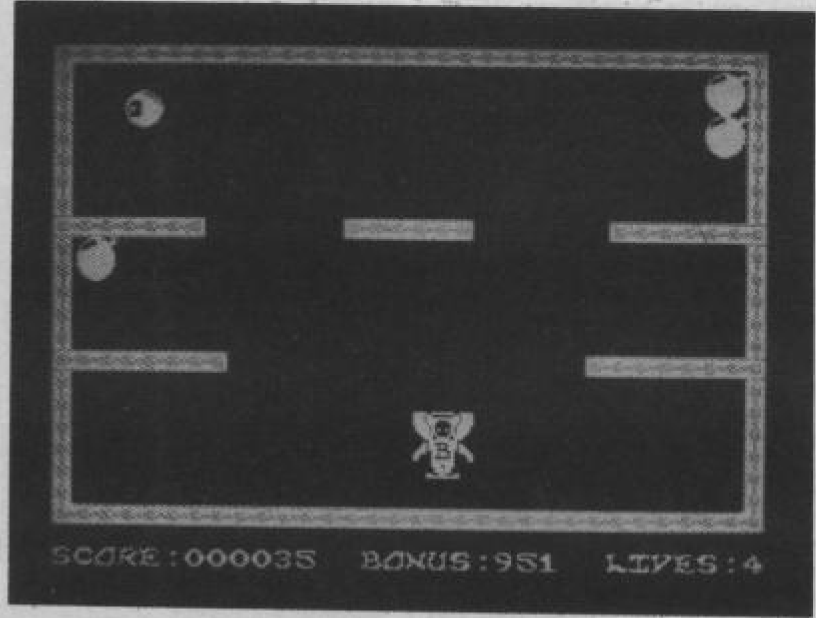
The story is thus—the really evil Kaptain Kleptor has planted bombs all over the Pentagon in an attempt to try to blow it up. Why? Well, like most power crazed loonies, he wants to rule the world and is trying his hardest to get to the position of World Leader. In the Pentagon he's not only left bombs but also robot guards to make sure that his explosives explode. The FBI refuse to give in to such pressure and have hired you, Bomber Bob, to deactivate the bombs.

There are no less than fifty rooms in the pentagon, which are laid out platform style in various configurations with bombs lurking everywhere. Taking the role of Superhero BB, it is up to you to travel round the room, defusing the bombs. At the start of the game you are given the choice of four doors, each of which leads into a different room in the pentagon. As you complete each screen, you are again given a choice of four doors and quite often get a little witty message thrown in for free!

On the face of it, BB's task doesn't appear too horrendous. While the bombs have been put in tricky corners, Bob's an excellent jumper and has no difficulty in reaching the explosives. All he has to do is touch a bomb, and it is instantly disabled, disappearing from view.



Peck the corn and eat the worms to keep your strength up in CHICKEN CHASE, a slightly risque game from the shores of France brought to you by the Firebird team



Just to make your superhero life a little more difficult, however, Kaptain Kleptor has left his robot guards behind him, as well as bombs. There are five types — globes, walkies, grabs, dynamiters and homers. Globes continually float around in the rooms rather like balloons and are deadly to the touch. Bob's got an Anti Globe hat one, and can head them away — but if any other part of his anatomy touches a globe, it's curtains for sure. Walkies do just that — they trundle along platforms and floors and pose problems, being deadly to the touch. Occasionally a walker will fall off a platform and turn into a globe. Homers a slightly intelligent (but not very) and are pretty deadly since they try their best to home in on you. Grabs appear on later levels — these are attached to the ceiling and one nip is deadly. Grabs also drop dynamite on Bob if he stays too long in one position.

The odds are not totally stacked against you, however, as the mad Kaptain Kleptov foolishly left a few of his Robot Control Pads lying around the place. If Bob picks one up, he can freeze robots for a little while in a room at the press of a button.

CRITICISM

● **'I found the game a bit dull really — although it resembles an arcade game** Bomber Jack **it's nowhere near as good. Some of the screens are diabolically hard — not the type of difficulty that keeps you coming back for more, but the underhand, totally unavoidable difficulty which makes you want to throw your Spectrum out of the window. There are a few nice touches, like the witty comments when you move between rooms, but overall it's disappointing. Although it's cheap, the contents aren't worth that much.'**

● *'Nice big graphics and a jolly tune are about the only thing* Bomber Bob *has to offer. The gameplay is incredibly slow — your character moves around the screen at such a slow pace that the game becomes very monotonous after a few goes. Some of the screens are so hard that I couldn't see myself completing them without the hours of practice that are required — especially since the game doesn't deserve such attentions. Generally I wouldn't recommend this game as it is boring and totally infuriating. Even so there are far worse cheapo games on the market.'*

● 'Well, Mastertronic started out with far worse games than the new Bug Byte budget range, so the future of Bug Byte doesn't look all that black. *Bomber Bob* is a well finished game with some highly detailed characters, especially the main character, Bob, who is great in the way he flies around defusing bombs with the greatest of efficiency. I enjoyed flying Bob around, and the comments during the changing of screens added that extra touch of humour that I reckon every game needs. Not too bad an attempt at all.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z left, X right, O up, K down, P jump, M activate the control pad, A pause, S start
Joystick: Kempston and Interface 2
Keyboard play: unresponsive
Use of colour: not very exciting
Graphics: big, but undetailed
Sound: burble
Skill levels: four
Screens: 50
General rating: a tricky game to play, nothing special

Use of computer	40%
Graphics	49%
Playability	43%
Getting started	46%
Addictive qualities	43%
Value for money	55%
Overall	**49%**

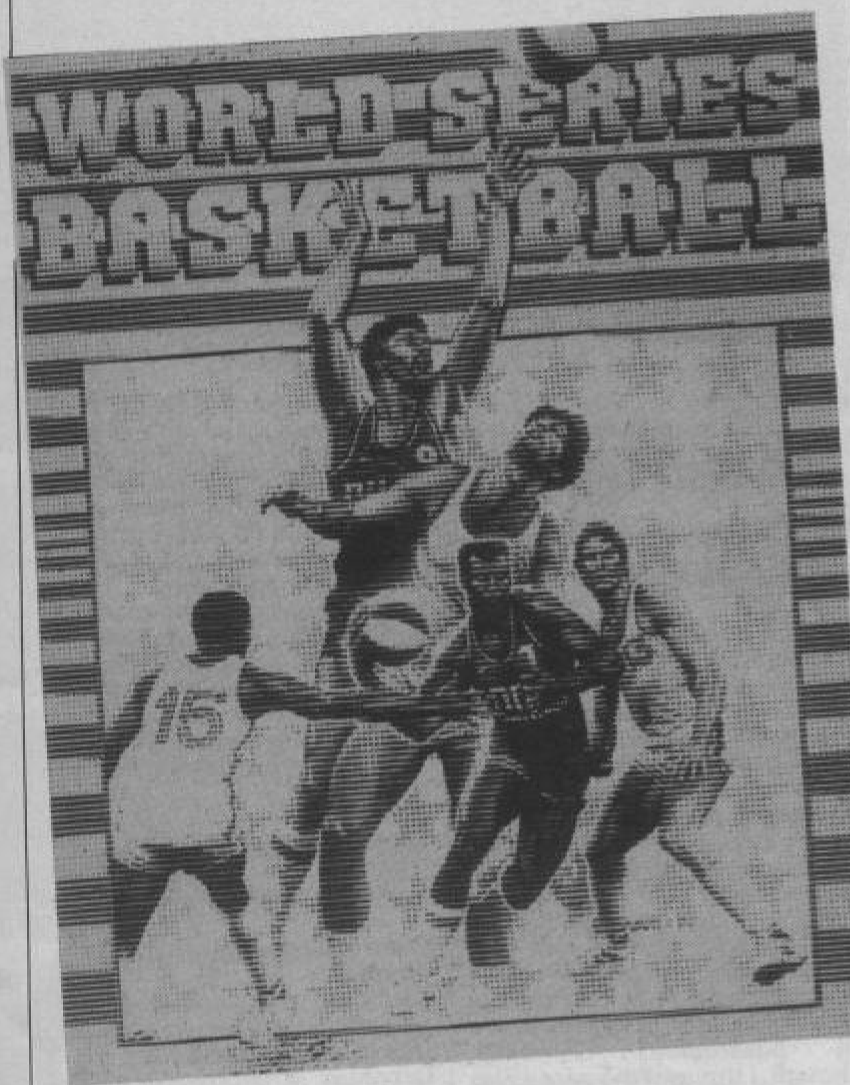
WORLD SERIES BASKET-BALL

Producer: Imagine
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**

When you load the game you are presented with plenty of options. You can select six levels of play against the computer or play against another human player. If the action is all too intimidating at first, there's always the practice mode if you're new to the game. This allows you to try scoring goals solo against three players and gives you the chance to practice ball control and dribbling skills. You start off in your own half and have to dribble your way up to the basket, evade the opposition, and plonk it in. You can also change the colours of the team and ground — useful if you've only got a black and white telly.

Once you've set all the options and want to play press the start button! The teams run out of the changing rooms and take their positions for the tip-off. A peep of the ref's whistle sounds and the game starts with the ball being thrown into the air between two players from opposing teams. You have to jump up into the air and knock it down to one of your team-mates before your opponent does in order to gain possession.

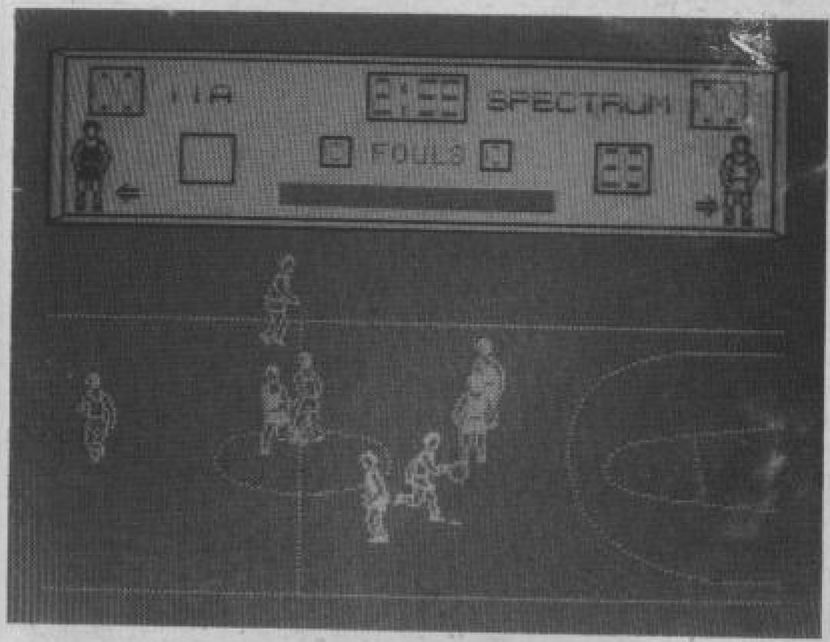
As the ball travels around the pitch the playing area scrolls from left to right. In all the playing area is between two and three screens long and is viewed panoramically like *Match Day*. Indeed, *World Series Baseball* works very much in the same way as Ocean's classic football game *Match Day*, and those who have played the football game won't have any difficulty with getting into basketball. Playing a whole computer basketball team is fairly straightforward — the nearest player to the ball is chosen by the computer and put under your control. You'll know which player it is because his shirt will mysteriously change colour. If you pass the ball the



the player receiving is automatically selected for you to control.

The general aim of the game is to retain possession of the ball as much as possible and to take as many shots as you can at your opponent's basket. A scoreboard keeps track of the game and tells you the time remaining and, of course, the score. It also acts as a message board — when a team scores 'GOAL' scrolls across it.

A game is divided into two halves, each half being three minutes long.



The Spectrum seems to be beating the CRASH basketball-playing minion in this game. WORLD SERIES BASKETBALL from Imagine takes a 28 point lead

CRITICISM

● **'First it was baseball, a relatively unheard of game over here which Imagine made into a big hit. I hope they have similar success with basketball, as it's a great game. As a rule I'm not a sport simulation person, but I've been playing this one for hours and I can't see myself putting it down until I get a decent score. The only niggle I have with this game is that it's hard to tell which of your four players you are controlling — and you can only change the player you control when you are in possession. Generally, though, I thought the game was exceptionally playable and I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys sports simulations.'**

● *'The only other Basketball game presently on the Spectrum is* One on One *and that wasn't too hot. Luckily, if you like this type of game,* World Series Basketball *is very good. The graphics allow you to change the colours of the teams and reminded me of* Matchday. *The game follows the rules of basketball, but they aren't too tough — you should be able to get into the game easily. Overall this is a good simulation, well presented (although it does crash now and again), but only worth getting if you know you like games of this sort.'*

● 'What a funny game this is: only four players per side and no referees. I was really looking forward to this after the brilliant *World Series Baseball*, but I suppose it couldn't be matched. The options page isn't as good as the other Imagine 84 games and the sound is a real let down, but the graphics make up for some of this. I'm not sure that all basketball fans will go for *WSB* (I didn't to begin with). There's quite a few niggly shortcomings with it which might annoy basketball fans. My advice would be to hang on for a while until Elite release their basketball game and compare the two rather than rushing out and buying this one now'.

COMMENTS

Control keys: Definable.
Joystick:
Keyboard play: confusing with two players
Use of colour: bland
Graphics: no shortage of attribute problems
Sound: Peep!
Skill levels: Six
Screens: N/A
General rating: bound to impress simulation fans

Use of computer	76%
Graphics	78%
Playability	82%
Getting started	77%
Addictive qualities	78%
Value for money	78%
Overall	**81%**

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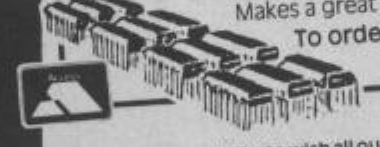


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HACKER

Producer: Activision
Retail price: **£9.99**
Language: **Machine Code**
Author: **Steve Cartwright (converted by Softzone Ltd)**



Imagine it's late at night and you've been using your modem to access some bulletin boards. You're tired and want to go to bed but you decide to ring just one more number. Accidentally, you mis-dial one of the digits and your screen turns blue with the prompt 'Logon Please.' Somehow you've hacked into another computer network. Now all you have to do is get out! In *Hacker*, that is easier said than done. There are no instructions other than those necessary to load the program. The rest is up to you.

Assuming you do succeed in accessing this 'network' (and help comes from the least likely source), then the game proper starts. The screen now shows a schematic of a Subterranean Remote Unit (SRU). You are asked to help complete a diagnostic scan of the device to ensure that it is in working condition. A successful scan satisfies the computer, which then sends you on to the next stage of the game. You are officially welcomed into the Magma Corporation's central computer which garbles cryptically about everything being nearly ready and the prospects of world domination. You are then presented with a screen displaying a world map overlaid with a grid. You are asked your name (no trick there) and to set up the map so that the night and day areas match those of your current setting.

When all this is done, the position of your SRU is highlighted on the map. The top half of the screen is split into three displays. On the left is a kind of option menu. This allows you to leave the subterranean network at certain junctions which correspond to locations of various major cities, use infra red to enable night vision and a variety of other functions. The centre section displays the view from your SRU. The right hand section contains a compass and message window (which only tells you that there is a message for you — to read it you have to press the 'M' key).

You can move about the network grid, though there are specific routes to certain locations which you have to discover, and 'pop up' in various cities. You soon discover, via messages, that the company has lost a secret document and various spies across the world each have part of it. By buying items off spies and giving them money or other items, you can collect all the parts of the document and then take them to . . . ah, that would be telling!

Your task is made complicated by several factors. First, there is a time limit. Of course, you have no idea what to trade with whom. Eventually, satellites begin searching for you (as Magma Ltd realise that there has been a security break) and if you fail to satisfy their security checks, you are thrown out of the system. All this, coupled with the fact that the spies are only out to satisfy their own ends and therefore, can mislead you, makes winning a complex task indeed.

CRITICISM

● **'This is a totally original game with an excellent theme and atmosphere. It is well implemented (with the exception of the satellites, which could have been better) and very addictive. Because it isn't really all that fast paced, it may not appeal to some but it still deserves success. The whole thing is littered with puzzles and clues and would make a great plot for a suspense movie. Well done, Activision.'**

● *'This might be the game for budding hackers, but experienced hackers may find it a bit too easy. DO NOT be disheartened with the welcoming message of 'LOGON' because it really is a let down after the initial happiness of hacking into this mega-big company, only to find that the same thing happens each time you attempt to hack in. The game reminded me of the film War Games, but instead of protecting the world, you, as a recognised secret agent, must help the company go for total world domination. This is obtained by trading with other agents, and digging tunnels across the South Atlantic. Try to avoid the satellites as every time*



they get you, you are confronted with a high-level security check, which becomes harder the further you get. Hacker has nice colourful graphics but hardly any sound. The bad point of the game is that there are no random features at all, even the passwords. An interesting and challenging game for the would-be hacker who can't afford a hundred odd pounds to get into real telephone naughtiness.'

●'This isn't an arcade game, and it's not an adventure either — it's sort of inbetween the two. Generally games like this and players like me don't go together — but I found it easy to get into *Hacker*, which was a surprise. Graphically it is a bit of a disappointment, and sound is very poorly used but I found the game fun to play, with a continuing sense of achievement which spurred me on to complete the next bit. I'd recommend this to anyone who likes "think" games, but I don't think arcade players would enjoy it too much as it can get a little boring at times.

COMMENTS

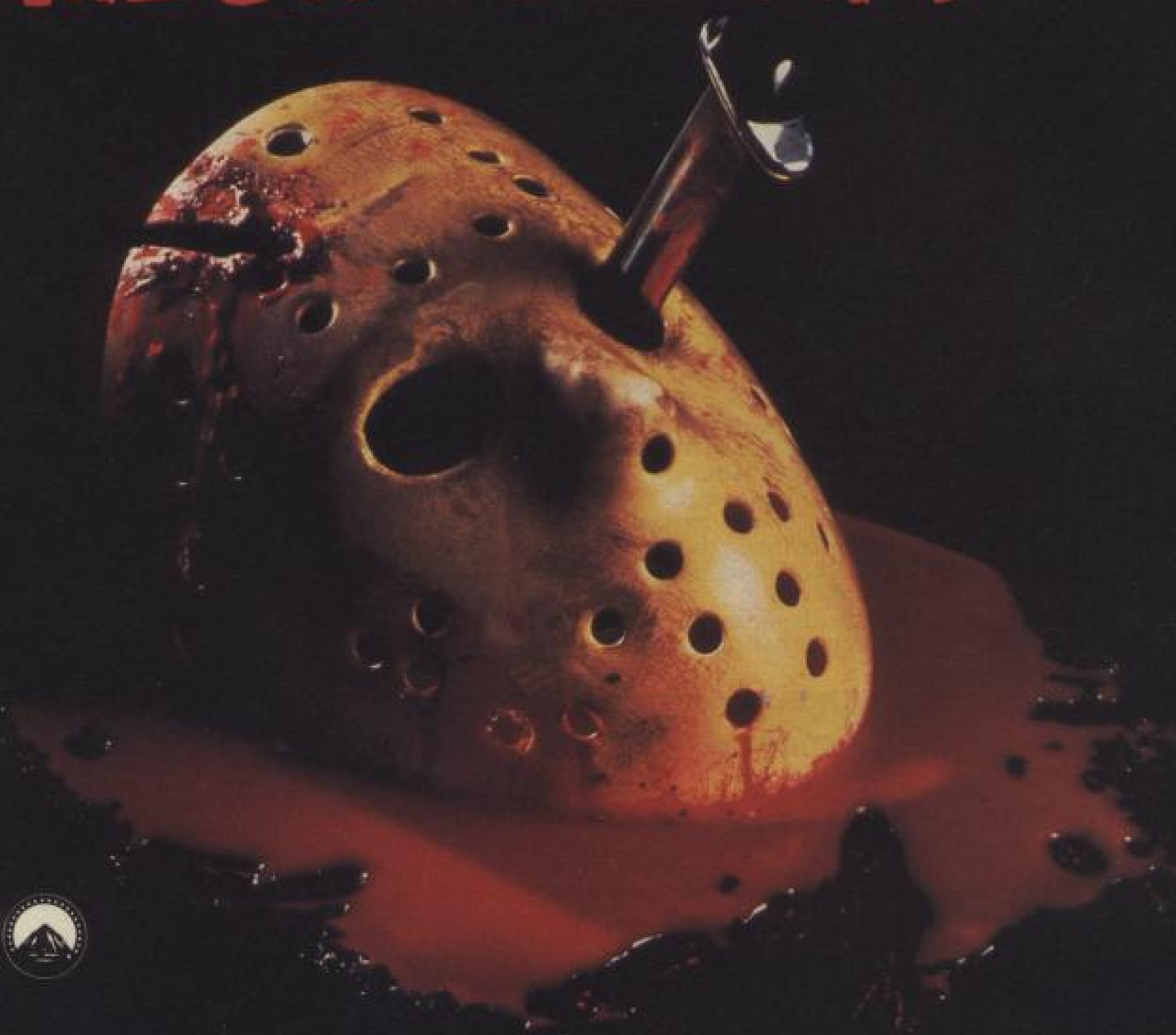
Control keys: cursor keys to move, ENTER to confirm
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: some attribute problems
Sound: poor
Skill levels: 1
General rating: a demanding and interesting game.

Use of computer 81%
Graphics 76%
Playability 78%
Getting started 73%
Addictive qualities 83%
Value for money 82%
Overall 81%

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GYRO-SCOPE

Producer: Melbourne House
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **Machine Code**
Authors: **Steve Lamb and Tony Mack**

Gyroscope puts you in a similar surrealistic situation to the arcade classic *Marble Madness*. The basic gameplay is very simple — you take control of a gyroscope with the task of getting from the starting post at the top of the course to the finishing post at the bottom within the allotted time. Each time the gyroscope topples, a life is lost. The course is very strange, presented with a surrealistic 3D effect featuring tall geometric buildings, ramps and steep slopes along and around which you have to guide your gyroscope. The course also provides a home for some rather strange (and vaguely familiar) aliens whose touch topples your spinner.

There are five courses in the run, each containing four screens. When you complete one screen the display turns purple and the next part of the course scrolls into view, replacing the section you've just traversed. The whole game is played against a clock, which ticks off the time relentlessly as you try to complete each quartet of screens. Completing each screen earns you bonus points, and completing a course of four screens earns you a bonus related to the amount of time remaining on the clock.

You begin the game with seven lives in store, and pick up a bonus life for each 1,000 points scored. If you fail to complete a screen course within the time limit, the gyroscope topples, when the count hits zero, a life is lost and you resume play from the spot you'd reached at time-out with the clock reset to start a new run. If things are going badly, you can press fire at any time and restart the game from scratch.

There are some very thin catwalks between the buildings and here the main danger lies. If you stray too near the edge of a construction or catwalk your gyro will become unbalanced and totter over — another life gone. When this happens your gyro is put back to the top of the screen on which you died, and thus time is lost as well as a life.

Taking control of a gyroscope takes some getting used to — once you start moving in one direction it takes a while to slow down. The beast will accelerate down slopes, and constant checks have to be made when you trundle down a slope to make sure you're not going too fast — if there's a sharp turn at the bottom you could find yourself in deep trouble, and run out of road.

Inanimate hazards on the course complicate matters further, and include glass slopes (which send you spinning in all directions), knobbly floors (which makes control of your gyro next to impossible), red discs (which send you completely out of control) and directional floors (which act like slopes only they're flat).

The landscapes are very deviously created; starting from relatively easy they get more tricky very rapidly. Some of the difficult courses contain thin catwalks, horrendous slopes with tight corners, holes in the floor and combinations of all these with the aforementioned hazards — being a gyroscope isn't all just spinning around.

CRITICISM

● **'Although I'm not supposed to say it** Gyroscope **obviously owes a lot to the arcade classic** Marble Madness. **It's graphically very similar and some of the gameplay elements are identical to the coin-op machine. That aside it's a brilliant game in itself, difficult and frustrating at times, but well worth persevering with. The graphics are excellent, with fabulous use of normal/bright. The sound is pretty good too, with a nice atmospheric tune and sound effects. In my eyes this is one of the most addictive games I've played on the Spectrum and is one that any games player just can't afford to miss.'**

● 'Gyroscope *is the nearest thing we've had to* Marble Madness *on the Speccy. The graphics are a bit mixed in quality — I noticed rather a lot of flicker apparently due to the sound — but the 3D playing area is excellent. Controlling your gyroscope takes a lot of practice, and the inertia takes a bit of getting used to. The first couple of games are bound to lead to most of your lives being lost very swiftly. Care has to be taken at the beginning of each screen as you often start in a potentially hazardous position, like at the top of a steep slope or on a thin ledge. Generally I would strongly recommend* Gyroscope *as it is very playable and addictive.'*

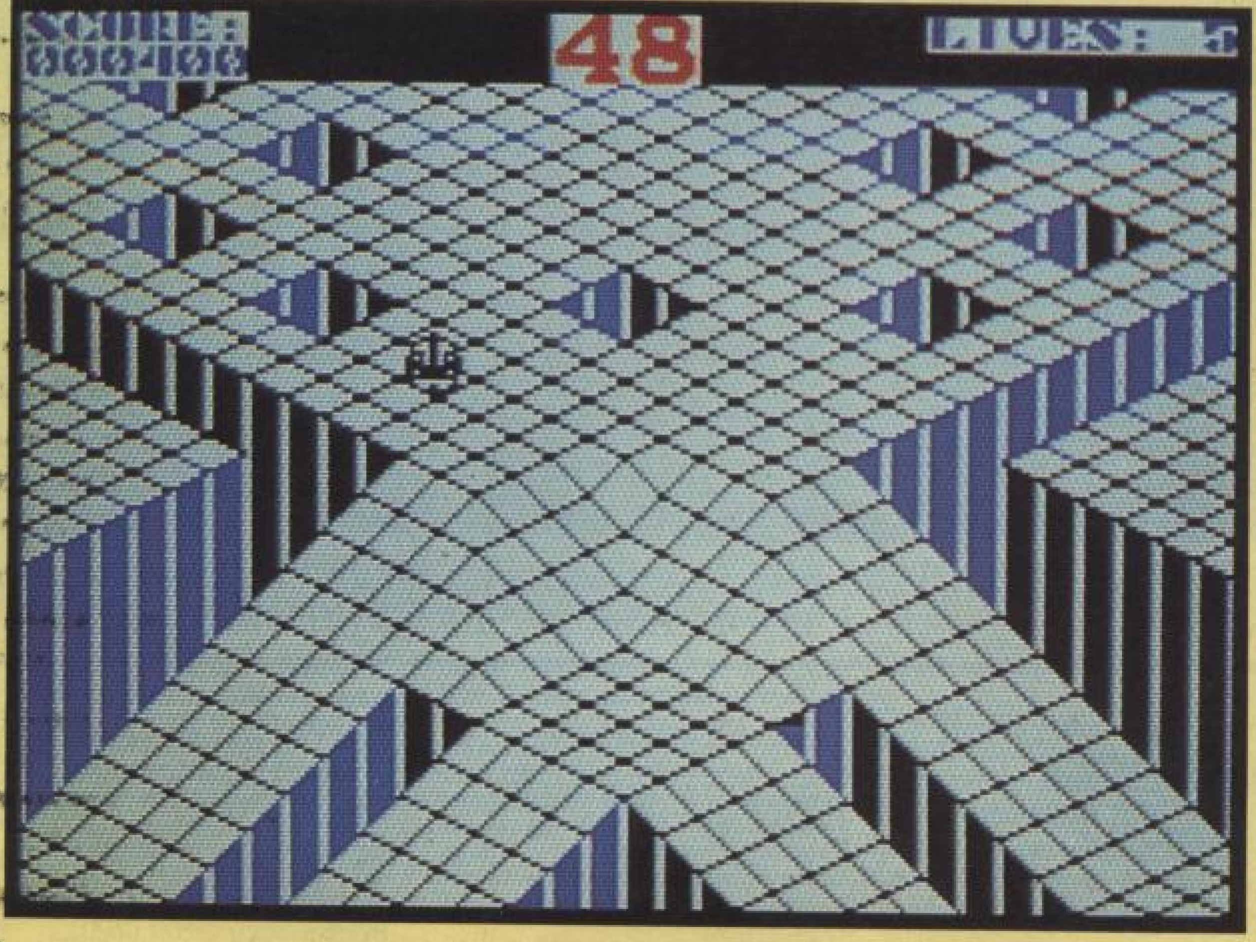
● 'I've never seen *Marble Madness* in the arcades but if this is the nearest thing on a Spectrum to it then I've obviously been missing something very good. The graphics in this game struck me as being simple but effective, and without too many attribute problems. The best thing about *Gyroscope*, though, is that it is very playable and proves quite addictive. On the whole it is an extremely good game — but it might just become a little repetitive after a while. A neat arcade type game. If you know you like this game type then buy it!'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, Z down, I left, P Right O to abort
Joystick: Kempston, cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: neatly done, minimising attribute problems.
Graphics: simple design which is remarkably effective
Sound: excellent, two channel simulation
Skill levels: progressively more difficult
Screens: twenty
General rating: up with the best arcade games available for the Spectrum

Use of computer	93%
Graphics	94%
Playability	92%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	92%
Value for money	93%
Overall	**92%**

GYROSCOPE from Melbourne House — pilot your spinner across a three dimensional landscape trying to avoid spills.



A LEPRICHAUN IN LONDON — SITTING IN ON A MELBOURNE HOUSE WORKING LUNCH

Sean Masterson goes to see PAULA BYRNE (She's wonderful) and GEOFF HEATH of Melbourne House

For some reason, British Rail and I just don't get on. It's something I haven't quite managed to put my finger on yet, but it seems that they know whenever I'm going to catch a train. I amble down to the station (any one, it doesn't matter) and their look-outs see me coming and warn their superiors. Then, just as I enter the station, they announce late departures which inevitably include my train. I suppose I'll just have to learn to live with it. This particular morning, I was patient. I got a coffee and waited for another announcement. Soon I was on my way, regardless of their pitiful attempt to prevent me.

Actually finding the Melbourne House office, when I arrived in London, was fairly easy. It's one city I never seem to get lost in even though I can't claim to be familiar with the sprawling metropolis. Catching a couple of tubes to Richmond Park followed by a brisk walk in the autumn sun, and I was at their door.

The company occupies a spacious ground floor office in a well hidden, but new block. Gold tinted windows guard secrets of upcoming games from over inquisitive eyes. Impressive. Almost as high-tech looking as CRASH Towers.

'Melbourne House are an independent sales and marketing team.' That was a fact repeated several times by Paula Byrne, the company's publicity manager, determined from the start to make me understand just *what* Melbourne House is. She typifies the strong sense of teamwork that pervades the Richmond offices.

I had arrived there just in time for lunch. That meant pizzas or chicken salads. Somehow I managed to have a chicken salad without the chicken. Sat at a massive table with everybody tucking in to steaming hot pizzas, their eyes all glued to the food, I felt part of some pagan ceremony - out of these pizzas great games do come. I felt really guilty telling them I was allergic to cheese. Ex-Activision man, Geoff Heath now runs Melbourne House UK. I realised that I was dealing with a dedicated business man when he decided that lunch was no excuse to stop working. He began quizzing everyone present (including myself) about what they thought of the PCW show. I thought I'd take advantage of the situation. What did he think of this year's show. 'We see it as a success,' he assured me. Paula added, 'We got an amazing feedback from the people who actually buy the games, not just the dealers.'



100Geoff Heath, the man who makes a ritual out of pizza consumption.

Mind you, it's easy to understand why they did think of the show as a success. *Way of the Exploding Fist* zooming up the charts and a promising looking product called *Fighting Warrior* on constant demo. That hasn't done too badly either. But then again, as members of the team are quick to point out, Melbourne House rarely make mistakes. This air of self confidence was the next thing to strike me about the atmosphere in their office.

They're a funny bunch, who look at life very matter of factly. 'I don't think we've ever had an unfair review,' said Paula. That sums them up. Mind you, working for MH, it's not a difficult boast to make. Most of their reviews have been praising rather than critical. They have always been known for coming out of the void every now and then to produce a classic game. Then they disappear again, out of sight. Now they see that as changing. Quantity and quality are two factors they want to combine. *The Hobbit* allowed them to achieve fame and strength while the English



computer games market was still young and very healthy. Situations change, however. No company can afford to wait most of the year in the hope that the next title will pull in a fortune. Even so, the company still has one of the largest research and development budgets in the UK.

Few people are aware of the way that the company works, but all was soon revealed. As Paula had already told me: the English Melbourne House is an independent outfit. They contracted a software development team called Studio B. From here, *Fighting Warrior* had emerged. They work at the rear of the main office, partitioned off and existing, for most of the time, in a kind of techno-squalor. A brand new C128 and disk drive lay sprawled almost un-noticed on a table, while a Sargasso Sea of power supplies, peripheral leads and other paraphernalia defied anyone to pass without risking life and limb.

The Studio B band gave me a look at *Gyroscope* while it was being developed. There wasn't much to see at the time, however. I did catch a more interesting glimpse of *Mugsy's Revenge* though. Now this was something interesting. An incredibly well animated sequence of a murder in a club as seen from a nearby office block. Apparently, the plot is that Mugsy is out of prison after his last series of escapades and this time he has to start from scratch to build his hoodlum empire. The new animated sections will really make your eyes water.

When they work on putting one of their games onto another machine, they don't see themselves as just converting it. Each different machine has something to take advantage of and this is a factor they bear in mind constantly. As a result, fast conversions may not always be possible. But each one stands on its own, in no way looking derivative. It's the work of dedicated programmers. Often burning the midnight oil to see their ideas turned into reality, they prove Paula's point about teamwork perfectly.

The company also work closely with their Australian and American sister companies, who deal mainly with Commodore software because of the markets over there. Even so, it was the Australians who came up with *Way of the Exploding Fist*, the biggest success on the Spectrum so far, this year. Then of course, there is the book publishing section of the company. They have produced more technical and games books for the whole range of modern micros than could possibly be mentioned here. Yet, like the software side of the company, they keep a very low key.

'Some games material comes from outside sources,' said Paula, talking about *Gyroscope*, 'but then our people work on it.' Fine, but what about *Lord of the Rings*? Ah, well. I couldn't see the game working at the time, but I was given a little appetiser. At the time of the visit, it had not been decided what the graphics proportion of the adventure would be, but there was plenty of quality material ready for the game. Not only that, but there would be an improved parser, much like Level 9's improved interaction device. The game is presented in a thick video case package with two cassettes, the first volume of Tolkein's trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, a guide book to get you started if you've never played *The Hobbit* and game specific instructions. Gimme, gimme!

Between Paula's desk and the Studio B hovel, was Andy Wood's domain. Andy, a refugee from Activision, came to Melbourne House to become their National Sales Manager. He already had the experience needed, gained from promoting *Ghostbusters* last year. With Melbourne House he had his Christmas work cut out for him. Massive emphasis on point of sale presentation for the new games was required. For Andy, that meant a lot of phone calls and no mean amount of co-ordination. An unimposing and genial man, it's hard to imagine anything worrying him. He just does his job and enjoys it.

To complicate matters for Andy and everyone else, the company are aiming for simultaneous release for their new games. It makes advertising easier, stocking easier and stops the kids from becoming frustrated. This however, will probably be achieved gradually rather than with the very next game.

But what of the next game. Everybody is aware of the imminent release of *Lord of the Rings* and *Mugsy's Revenge* but there are others. Although, Paula explained that a release date has not been set, there is *Big Daddy's Rock and Wrestle* a departure from the boxing look-alikes that could well spawn a few clones of its own. *Gyroscope* a maddening game in which you guide a gyroscope across a scrolling course, should be in the shops by the time you read this (*certainly is. There's a review in this issue* — **ED**). *Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race* promises to add something new to the sports simulation scene while fans of the 'cartoon adventures' currently being developed should enjoy the smooth and colourful animation in *Asterix*. Like they said, quantity and quality are the company's targets from now on.

Further into the future, and company strategy isn't quite so apparent. The sixteen bit revolution is just around the corner (so they tell us) but when it does come, Melbourne House should be able to take it in their stride and come out showing a profit. They are a friendly bunch who work in a subtle but amicable atmosphere. That comes over from the moment you enter the office. I doubt if anything the future holds bothers them too much.

Originality is one quality the company never seems to have lost. The know the strength of a good idea and the kind of marketing it will require to reach the top. They are open minded and will consider anyone's ideas. If they're sound ideas, they can and do make the most of them. Although nobody mentioned it, the level of professionalism in their office is difficult to surpass. Perhaps that's why they are so successful.

Must be all those pizzas . . .




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I O·F T·H·E

I OF THE MASK

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Sandy White, Angela Sutherland and Paul Fik**

Sandy White, author of *3D Ant Attack* and the follow-up *Zombie Zombie* has now produced his third game for Rod Cousens, who is publishing it under the new Electric Dreams label.

The game revolves around the tortuous Newgama III space trials. Equipped with an A4A Pack Jet Suit, you are cast into a massive maze containing 32 universes. To escape you need to construct a robot from active robot spares lying around within the universes which may be accessed from nodes in the maze.

There are enough parts within the maze to create at least one robot, but before a robot part can be added to your collection it must be deactivated. The parts also have to be located and deactivated in a specific order, starting from the feet upwards. Upon collecting the final component, the mask, the greatest award is bestowed: you become Of The Mask.

The top half of the screen is taken up with the view of the maze and includes a little effigy of your good self on the lower part. The bottom of the screen contains various status indicators and keeps track of the robot you are assembling, with parts being added as you collect them.

The corridors of the maze are displayed in one colour, each wall being shaded with a different pattern depending on the angle of the wall to your view. As you move through the maze, the perspective changes, together with the shading. When you turn a corner, instead of just flipping ninety degrees into the next corridor, the corner and walls move around smoothly.

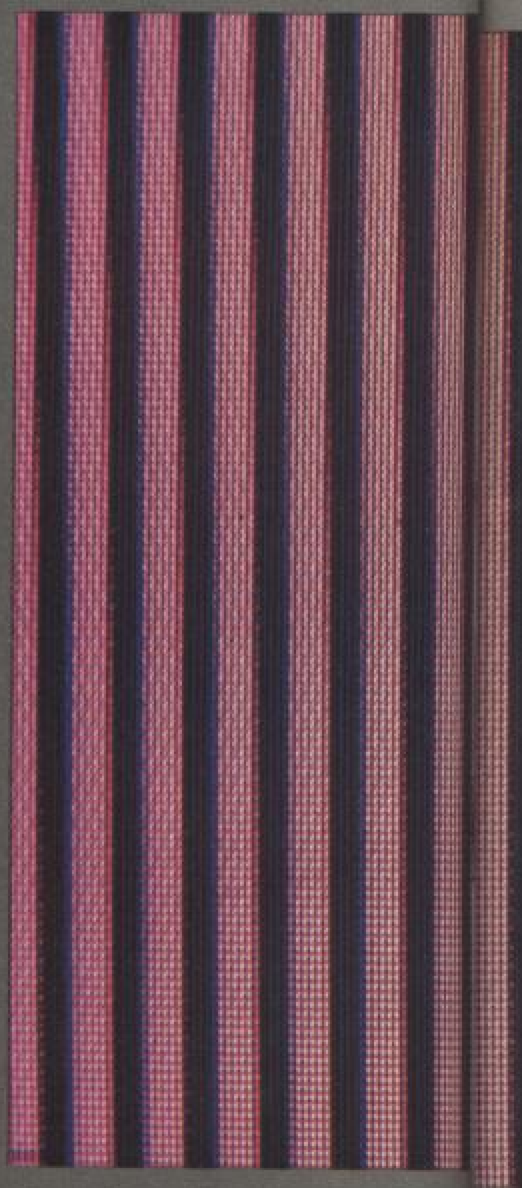
The maze is split into different sections or zones, each having a colour allocated to it. In the corridors the colour of the walls matches the colour of the zone you're in, and flashing areas shown on the map also have flashing walls when you move through them. On the bottom right hand corner of the screen is a small window showing your position upon the overall map, with your direction and position marked by a small arrow. As you move about the arrow stays central and the window scrolls over the larger maze map. Pausing the game is quite helpful, since the full map of the maze is displayed.

Along the various corridors are handily positioned node points: these are gateways to the robot parts and other sections of maze. Upon entering a node section the view flips to three giant crystals which rotate about the screen and you are given ammunition for your laser — the number of shots you have remaining is shown on a little counter in the status area.

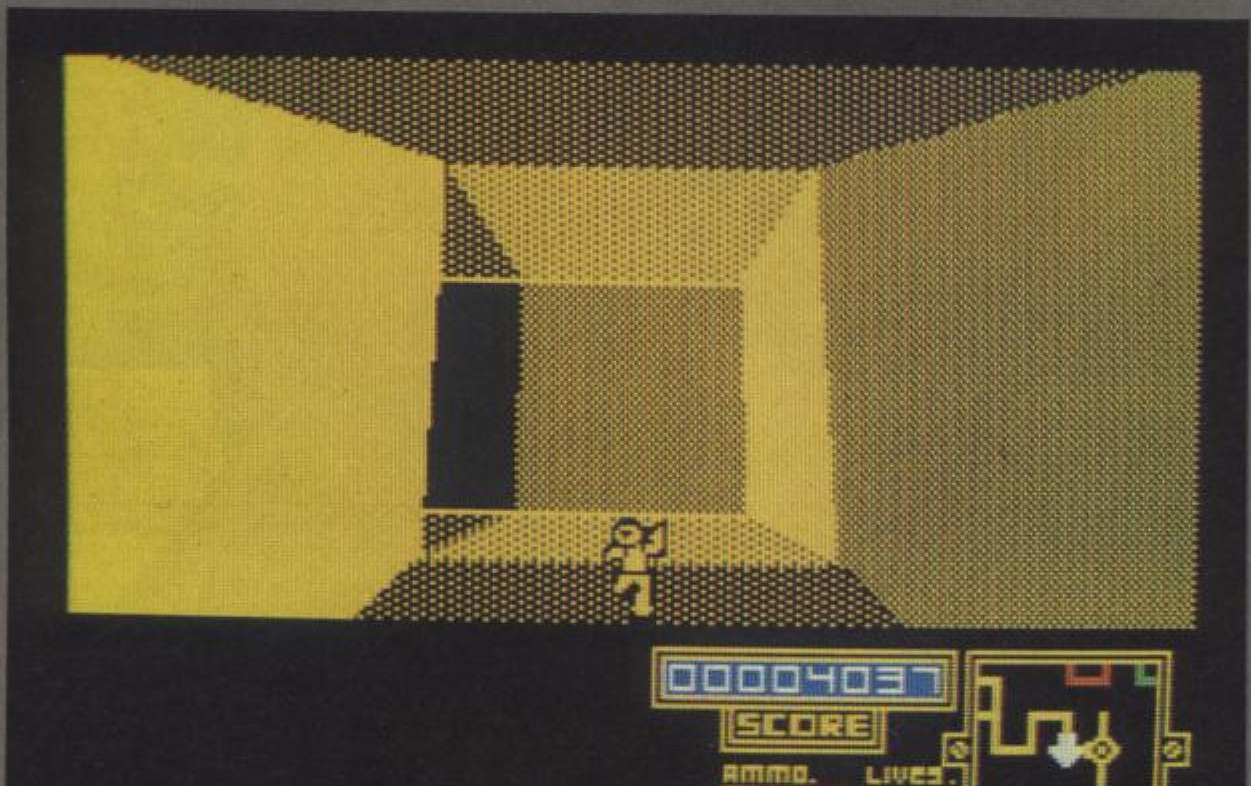
When you fire on a crystal, it beams you to another place. The top crystal transports you to a different node with a different set of three crystals, while the bottom right crystal takes you to a section of the maze. (These crystal gates are shown on the main map of the maze by flashing areas). The bottom left crystal will transport your man into the parts store in the universe behind the three crystals.

Once in a universe you are twisted and rotated around the robot part it contains and must blast it three times in the time you are allowed. Do this, and the component is deactivated. Bonus power is awarded whenever you deactivate a part, but the component is not added to your robot unless it is the next part in the sequence.

Throughout the game a digital power counter decrements — if you don't visit a node, enter a universe and deactivate a robot part before your energy runs out, it's time to start another game. You start with three lives, however, and if energy's getting desperately low you can enter a universe, deactivate a part and gain the bonus energy. If the part is not in the correct sequence, then you keep the energy but lose a life.



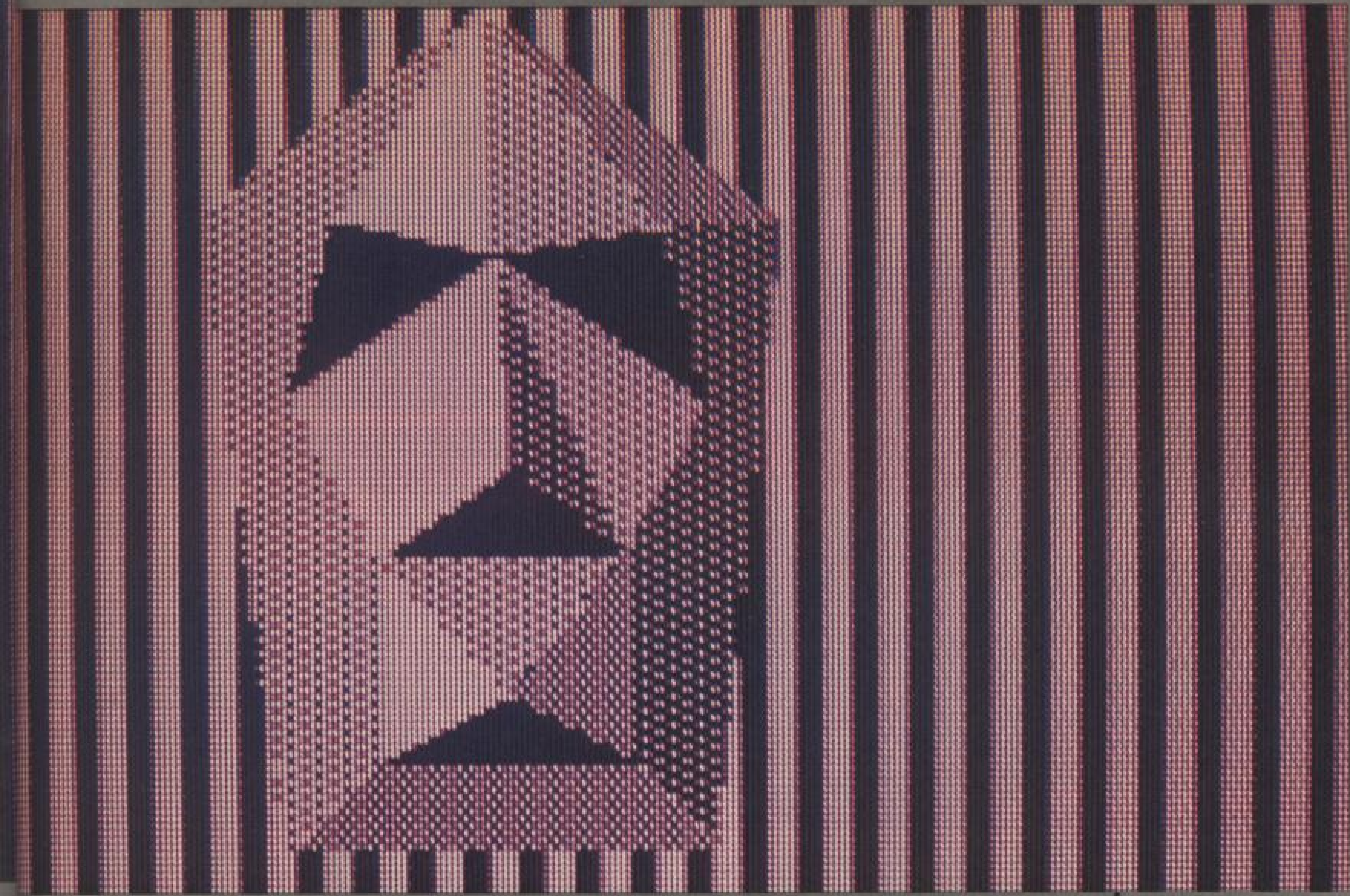
Legging it down a yellow section of the maze corridor in I, OF THE MASK. You're not far from a node, as the little map window bottom right reveals. So far you've lost a life, gained eleven shots for your laser and haven't got a single bit of robot



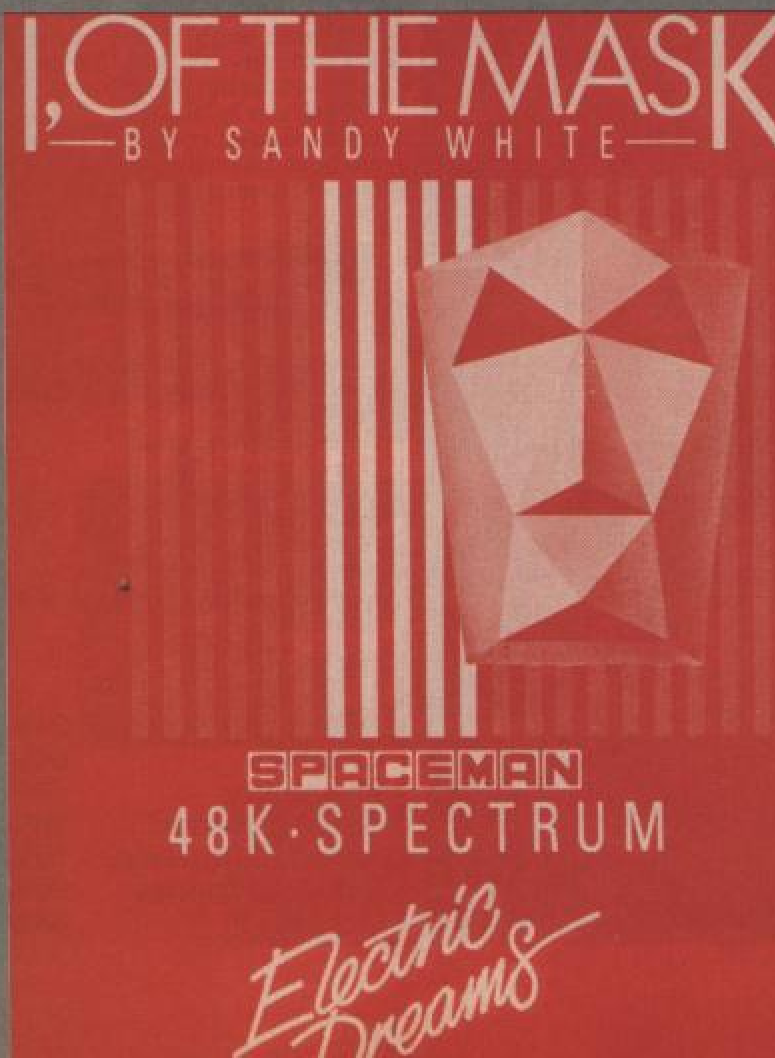
CRITICISM

● **'This highly original program got many a gasp when it was loaded up in the office. If you merely look at the graphics objectively they're not that hot, but once you get into playing the game it's possible to get totally lost within the illusion.** I of the Mask **is technically very cunning, and there's a fair bit of strategy to back it all up in the gameplay. There's quite a challenge in assembling a robot. Deactivating the activated robot components was probably the strongest section. A major portion of the game depends on mapping out the vast maze area — not really my scene, though I can see the appeal for other users.'**

● *'The game employs some of*



The Mask which taunts you until you succeed in assembling a robot in I, OF THE MASK



the most remarkable graphics I've come across on a Spectrum. Some of the perspective shots are brilliant. Sandy White's obviously learned a lot since 3D Ant Attack. *The game contains far more than meets the eye and in fact at first, I wasn't aware that half of the game actually existed! The extremely vague instructions didn't help — giving no clues about how to use lives for instance — which was quite annoying. As it turns out,* I, of the Mask *is a deceptively subtle game. It's an attractive game too, and will doubtlessly appeal to many. Evidently, Sandy White is far ahead of his time.'*

● 'About two years ago Sandy White released a game called *3D Ant Attack* which, at the time, was very impressive. His latest game continues the 3D theme but his techniques have advanced a bit from 1983. *I of the Mask* is graphically superb and a delight to watch. Essentially *I of the Mask* is a maze/strategy game with a few differences. While being very playable I suspect that once I completed it I wouldn't go back to it again. With that said, it's not going to be a game that can be finished quickly. *I of the Mask* represents a step forward in 3D graphics. Overall, it is a very impressive game and if you like maze games, there's no excuse for not buying it.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: 0 to fire, H to pause and view the main map, direction keys according to joystick option selected
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Protek/Cursor
Keyboard play: unusual arrangement (see above), very responsive
Use of colour: monochromatic, avoiding attribute problems
Graphics: Sandy White . . . excellent
Sound: adequate, but not outstanding
Skill levels: one
Screens: corridors linking 32 universes
General rating: technically excellent, backed with a fair bit of strategic gameplay

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	96%
Playability	92%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	88%
Value for money	87%
Overall	**92%**

THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE

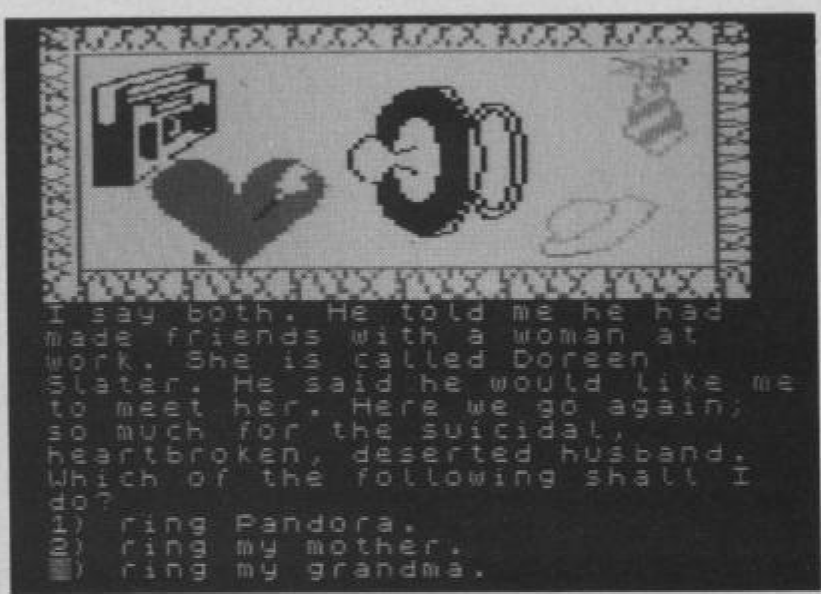
Producer: Level 9/Mosaic Publishing
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Richard Kelly, Caroline Holden**

Just about everyone except perhaps those trappist monks in the Welsh heartlands who have locked themselves away in solitary confinement never to see the light of day again has surely heard of Adrian Mole. There are his two diaries, he's just had a telly program based around his exploits, he's also been on numerous chat shows and now he's on a computer game. What next?

Although the writers of this program are Level 9, *Adrian Mole* cannot really be classed as a traditional adventure — it's more of a decision game. At regular intervals during play you are asked to step into Adrian's (sanitised) shoes and make the decisions for him. For example, Adrian gets a spot. Do you squeeze it, bung on some cream or just ignore it? Each decision either awards or takes away points from your total percentage depending on how successful the move was. Each percentage has a rating starting from *average schoolboy* to goodness knows what — we haven't completed it yet.

There are graphics constantly on screen which regularly update during the course of the game. Most of the pictures are based on the illustrative themes found in the original book. The text also, is based very much on the original work by Sue Townsend. Most of the time, the text scrolls through in the form of a computerised book, before options are presented to the player.

The game at least matches the traditional Level 9 format in terms of appearance. The screen is split into a graphics window in the top half and text window in the bottom half. Because of the lack of text input and the rather channelled nature of the game, it isn't possible to skip through certain areas of the plot, the way you could in standard Level 9 fare. Finding a route through this game is likely to cause some real headaches.



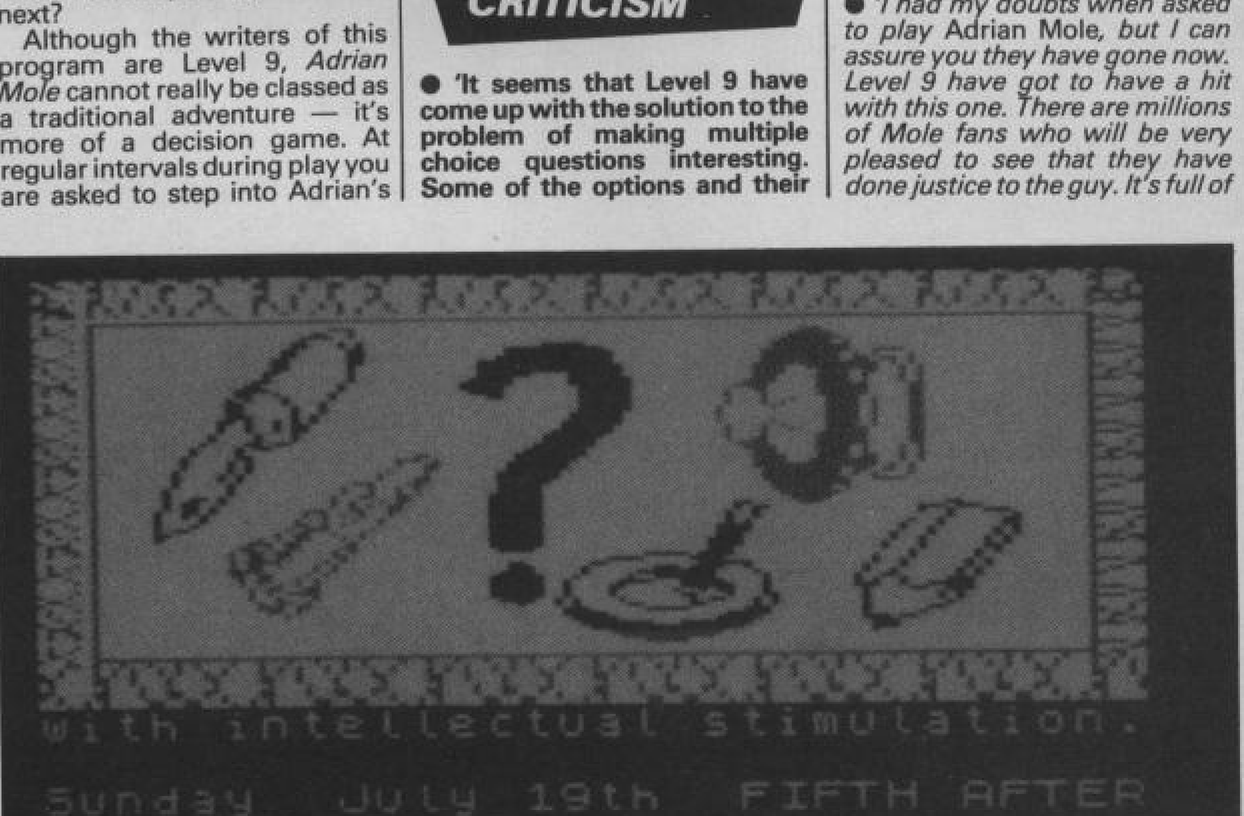
ADRIAN MOLE — a lad in a permanent quandary in the game written by LEVEL 9 and published by MOSAIC. You get to help the tormented teenager make his mind up.

CRITICISM

● **'It seems that Level 9 have come up with the solution to the problem of making multiple choice questions interesting. Some of the options and their conclusions are very funny indeed. Making a game out of the idea is, however, not so much of a good thing. Most of the time you are reading the same stuff that appears in the book (and that's a lot cheaper). Level 9 have come out with some excellent games — and I'm not criticising the quality of the programming — but I don't feel that this really works as a game, too well.'**

● *'I had my doubts when asked to play Adrian Mole, but I can assure you they have gone now. Level 9 have got to have a hit with this one. There are millions of Mole fans who will be very pleased to see that they have done justice to the guy. It's full of funny situations with witty solutions and the enjoyment of taking part in Adrian's decision making is something that just does not pall. I can see the lack of real action putting some people off, but otherwise this is a game you should get — right now.'*

● 'The main problem with this game is the relatively large amount of reading necessary between 'moves.' This means that if the humour doesn't make you laugh, you'll soon be fed up with it. But the strength of the game lies in its humour as well. You should give your joystick muscles a rest, once in a while anyway. This will probably be the funniest way to compromise. The humour is poignant and clever. I can't imagine this being an easy game for Level 9, or anyone else. It loads in segments as it is quite large. It's quite out of the ordinary as well. It'll probably sell on the name alone, but it deserves to anyway. If you're open minded about games and are bored with the norm, get this one — yesterday.'



COMMENTS

Control keys: 1-3 decisions, CAPS to continue
Joystick: N/A
Keyboard play: good
Use of colour: fair
Graphics: average
Sound: N/A
Skill levels: N/A.
Screens: N/A
General rating: very good, and different

Use of computer	84%
Graphics	65%
Playability	78%
Getting started	80%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	85%
Overall	**86%**


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KERRASH! N·E·W·S

THE MAD HATTER GOES SAILING!

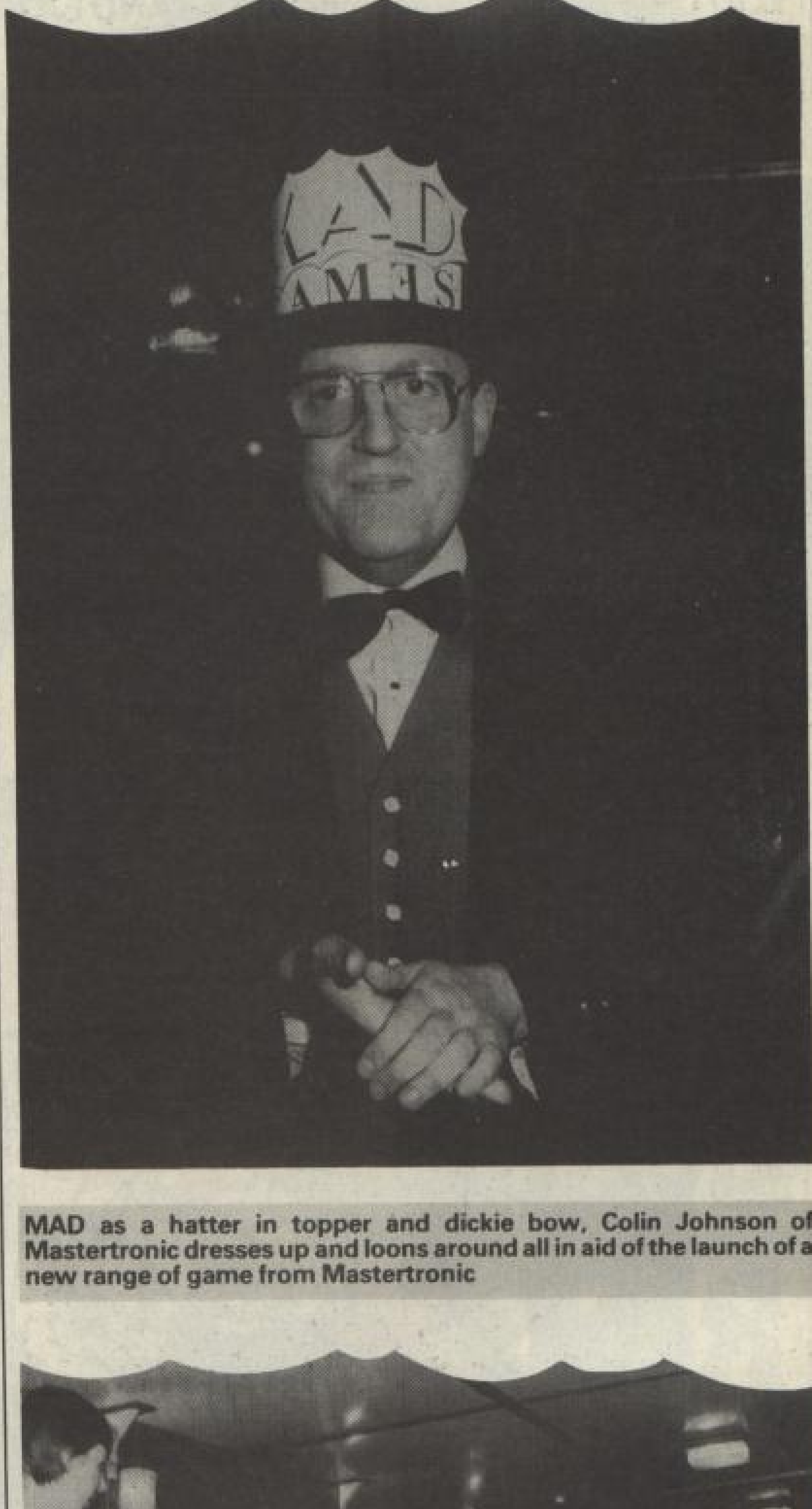
Mastertronic has gone MAD! No, that's not a comment on their mental health but the acronym for their new range of games, standing for **M**astertronics **A**dded **D**imension or some such. Excuse if I'm a bit hazy about that aspect because they also went mad (as in wild) and really pushed the boat out (pun!) to launch (megabad pun!) the new games with the London lig of the year. Four hours of free bar and excellent buffet on a boat on the Thames, plus the charming Debbie, Denise and Marianne attending to the every need of tired and emotional hacks.

Spellbound is the first Spectrum title in the new range, an arcade adventure from David Jones, author of smash hit *Finders Keepers*, one of the programs that has given budget software a good name. With this range of supergames, to be released at the rate of only one or so a month, Mastertronic have sent their prices soaring to an extortionate £2.99!!! That's almost as much as CRASH pay me for news items. (*It will be, if you carry on like this* — **ED**)

Also on display was the game that introduces us to Andromadous, the planet where men are mechanical and alien sheep are worried. *One Man and His Droid* is an everyday tale of intergalactic shepherding. It's part of the standard £1.99 range, which now also includes *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, a very silly adventure previously from **Dream**.

It is thought that the whole event cost a little more than even £2.99, but it was well worth it, let me assure them (hic).

John Minson



MAD as a hatter in topper and dickie bow, Colin Johnson of Mastertronic dresses up and loons around all in aid of the launch of a new range of game from Mastertronic

MUD LAUNCH DATE CLOUDY

British Telecom's Multi User Dungeon has been hit by "unforseeable technical problems", which mean it won't be up and running for a while. BT persons assure us that it should be on line before the end of this year, however, and Dungeon Itchy modem owners will have to wait awhile.

The Great Mud Challenge, in which the champions from 10 computer magazines will slug it out for fame and fortune inside the Dungeon will now take place in the New Year.

BIZZI BODIES

The **Micronet** crew have added a whole new area to their framestore. A whole five hundred pages are now devoted to financial information — including advice on most aspects of money management, from mortgages through taxation to starting your own business.

And if you're jobhunting, The Bizznet will be carrying executive job advertisements supplied by Reed Employment. So now you don't need to be in The City to be in The Know when it comes to loot.



Is the boat listing, or was it the photographer. All aboard for a party on a London boat to mark the launch of MAD games.

N·E·W·S I·N·P·U·T··

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SPECTRUM AND EAT IT!





It just goes to show what you can achieve with a little perserverance and a desire to achieve something. Neil Whitehead, a reader from County Durham, sent us in these snaps of a cake made to celebrate the 21st Birthday of a friend of the family. The celebration scoff was created by a Miss J Campbell, who just might find herself taking orders, once this gets out. Looks yummy.

LENSLOCK LOCK OUT

Digital Integration have apparently been having a few problems with the *Lenslock* installed as front end protection on their new helicopter simulation game, *Tomahawk*. It seems a few magazines had difficulty in getting advance copies of the program to run (not us, we hasten to add smugly).

A few improvements have been made to the final production version of the game, with a tutor mode added so you can practice code reading and entry and the instructions on how to use the protection system have been expanded considerably.



PUTTING THE ELECTRONIC PENCIL TO PAPER

Further to our profile on the men behind *The Fourth Protocol*, which was the result of an interview conducted in a rather hostile cafe in London, the Electronic Pencil Company **would like to clarify one of the points made. They contacted CRASH Towers with the following missive:**

In the interview in the September issue of CRASH, we inadvertantly gave the impression that John Lambshead and Gordon Patterson gave us a design 'for a very standard text input adventure.' Their design was highly original and made use of detailed atmospheric and concurrent plotlines set in a well conceived framework. We enjoyed working with them and The Fourth Protocol's icon driven mechanics were very much a joint effort. We have parted company in order to persue our own design ambitions.

We are very sorry to have created such a misleading impression.

The Electronic Pencil Company

THE BIG PLAYOFF

Any day now some lucky *Gyron* player will be richer to the tune of a small sackful of money or better off by one Porsche 924. A special version of the game has been written for the playoff which will take place in London on 11th November. More details next issue, winner willing.



Bruce Everiss, for it is he

MORE PROCESSING WORDS

Oxford Computer Publishing are justifiably proud of their new Word Processor for the Spectrum — at £12.95 they have high hopes for it. Bruce Everiss, Marketing Manager for OCP is convinced that it will become the best selling serious program on the Spectrum. To make the package more attractive, a free copy of *Address Manager* on the flip side of the cassette which as its name infers, is an address filing, indexing and retrieval program.

Next issue, we'll really have a competition for you to enter. Rotronics Wafadrives will be on offer as top prizes, and complete sets of OCP software will go to runners up. You'll need to get hold of a copy of the *Word Manager* program to enter, though. We're going to be asking you to write something with it!





WHAT A FESTIVE STUNT

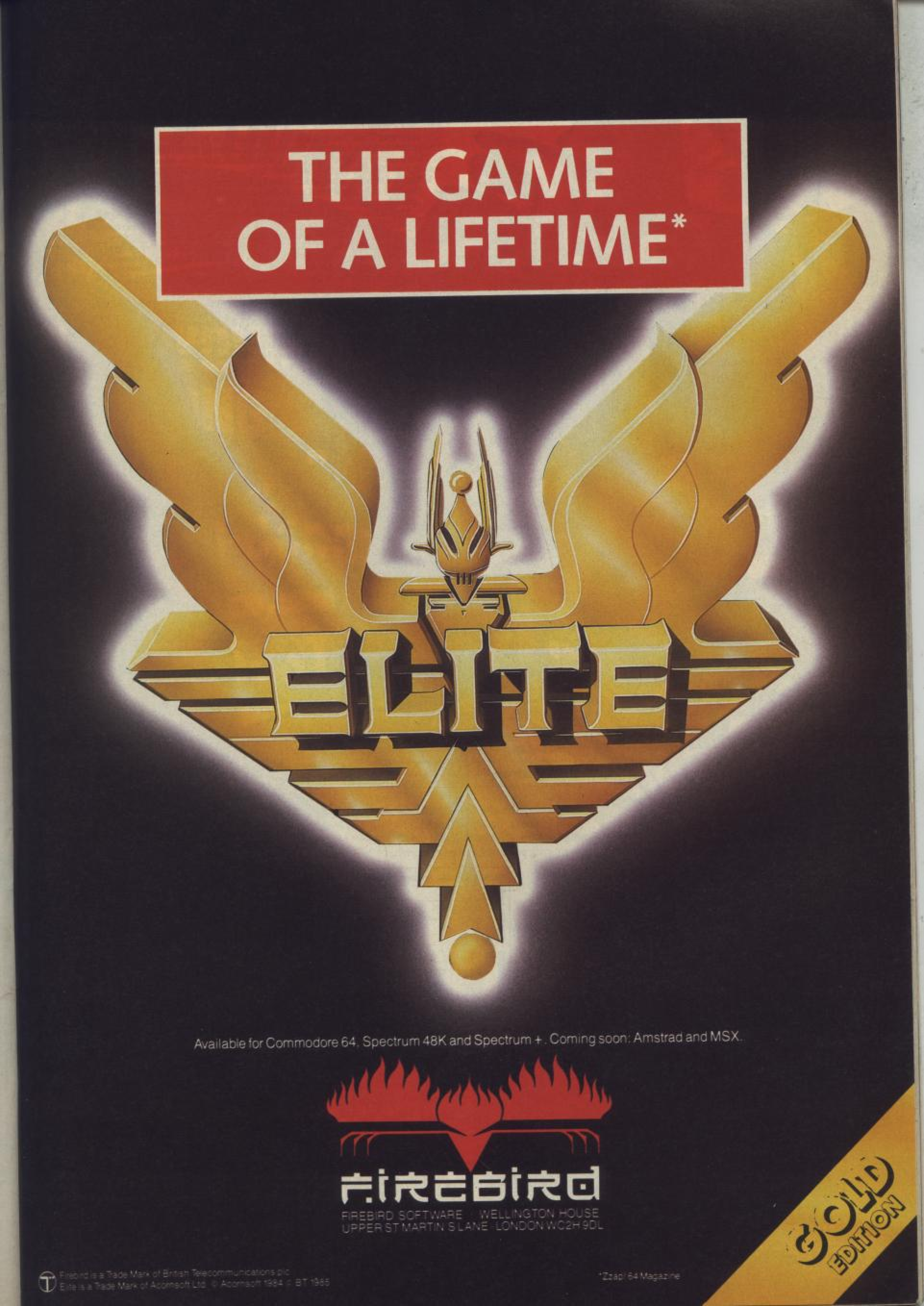
Seasonal greetings from the men at the **Virgin Magastore** checkout desk. Yes chips, this is the Virgin animated Christmas card. All that is required is for you to load in side 'A' and then type in the name of the recipient and the sender. Once the formal bit is done the 'card' will do its thing and play a little melody followed by the animated picture.

In the foreground there is a very Christmassy house. If you look carefully you can see Santa zig-zagging from left to right all the time getting closer to the house. As soon as he arrives he parks the reindeer and walks over to the chimney. The view then switches to the inside of the house, on the right hand side there a very cute Christmas tree, Santa mooches over and stuffs something into a stocking. As soon as he has completed the obligatory gift planting he turns and makes for the table where some refreshments have been left. The mince pie vanishes in a blink of the eye, quickly followed by a glass of Sherry. No wonder Santa emits a quick 'Hic' at the speed he has to work! Indigestion must be an occupational hazard for Santa but he doesn't let it get him down, he just makes for the chimney and zooms off for the next delivery.



All very jolly and festive, but there's more. If you grow weary of the Santa stunt, flip the tape over and load in your 'free' game, *Space Command*. You find yourself in control of a space ship and your mission is simple. Destroy all alien life forms as they enter the confines of the screen. In order to frazzle the foe efficiently you will have to manoeuvre your craft about the skies and avoid colliding with the enemy. You can select a mode in which the aliens actually shoot back in which case the whole affair is considerably more dangerous.

Since the game is staged on one screen only, anything flying off one edge of the screen wraps round to appear on the opposite side. This can be very confusing if you insist on flying about at great speed as you are certain to collide with a nasty. The aliens will push home their attack, wave after wave. If you manage to destroy a complete wave then you will be rewarded with an extra life — but no mince pies.


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For all mail-order customers we are offering five 12" × 16" glossy posters of the cassette inserts plus our 1985 Poster Calendar Pure Collectors Items

AND ALL FREE!!!



Can Thor save Cute Chick from the hungry dinosaur? Only you can help. At first he only has to jump rocks and holes. Then he must jump and duck, almost simultaneously, to avoid the logs and low hanging tree limbs in the Petrified Forest.

The only way Thor can get across the river is to hop on the turtles' backs. These turtles sometimes get tired and submerge at the wrong moment, much to Thor's dismay. To add to Thor's difficulties, his arch-enemy Fat Broad is waiting on the other side to ambush him.

If Thor's timing is good, the Dooky Bird will help him over the lava pit. If he jumps the pit just when Dooky Bird is overhead, the prehistoric bird will pick him up and carry him across!

Thor must build up plenty of speed during his downhill run before the cliff. Timing is crucial, too. If Thor's balance is off or he is too slow he will crash into the ravine or the face of the cliff.

Once over the cliff, Thor faces his most difficult challenge: the volcanic eruption. In addition to the obstacles on the ground, he is showered with boulders from the sky.

Once again Thor must cross the river on the turtles' backs.

Then, at last, he must face the dinosaur!

If Thor can get past the dinosaur and into the cave, he has only a short way to go to rescue Cute Chick. On his way, Thor must duck under stalagtites and jump over stalagmites to avoid crashing.

If Thor does crash, don't worry: he has five wheels. But True Love is calling him, so use all your agility and cunning to help him rescue Cute Chick!

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TRUNDLE, TRUNDLE, TRUNDLE, TRUNDLE

Crash Competition

DRIVE YOUR WAY TO SOME GOOD LISTENING
In Software Projects' B.C.'s Quest for Tyres Competition

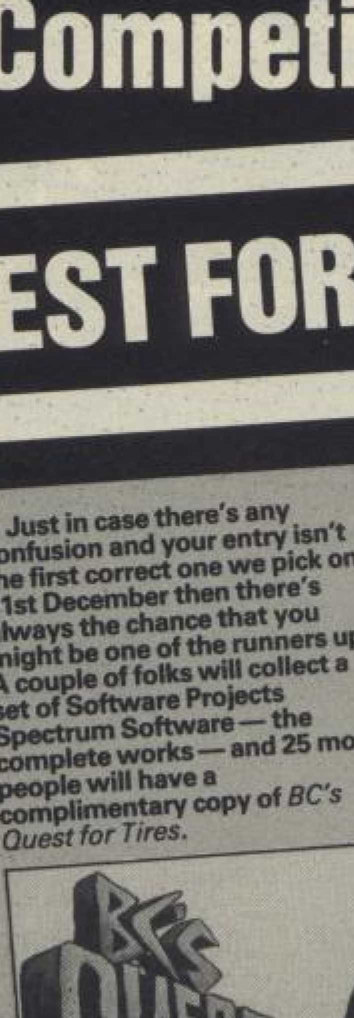
B.C.'s QUEST FOR A PRIZE HI-FI

Thor's on a quest to save Cute Chick from the clutches of the nasty old dinosaur, and it's your job to guide him through the rough, tough tricky terrain he has to traverse on the way to the dinosaur's cave. In Software Projects' conversion of the game featuring the characters from the cartoon strip B.C. there's a whole host of obstacles to overcome, including rivers, sharp pointy stalactites, manic diving turtles which you need to use as stepping stones and even a lava pit! (Don't get many of those around nowadays, thankfully.)

The nice man at Software Projects decided he'd like to give away a Midi Hi-Fi system worth several hundred pounds to a CRASH reader, so he came up with the following questions, gave us a ring and asked if we could help put him in touch with the winning CRASH reader. Pretty smart prize eh? No problem, we said to the man. We'll find you a winner for your whizzo prize. We're always happy to co-operate.

Now it's your turn to co-operate . . . You need to write in with the answers to the competition so we can identify you as the winner.

Just in case there's any confusion and your entry isn't the first correct one we pick on 31st December then there's always the chance that you might be one of the runners up. A couple of folks will collect a set of Software Projects Spectrum Software — the complete works — and 25 more people will have a complimentary copy of *BC's Quest for Tires*.



1) **In which well known Sunday newspaper does B.C. appear?**

(a) News of the World, (b) Mail on Sunday, (c) Sunday Express, (d) Sunday Mirror

2) **Who created the character B.C.?**

(a) Sierra-On-Line, (b) Leachim Seivad, (c) Schultz, (d) Sydney

3) **Who wrote *B.C.'s Quest for Tires* on the Spectrum?**

(a) Matthew Smith, (b) Michael Davies, (c) Derrick Rowson, (d) Leachim Seivad

4) **In which country did B.C. first appear?**

(a) America, (b) France, (c) England, (d) Australia

5) **What is the name of the (feathery) bird in the game?**

Answers, please, on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to **TIRES COMPETITION, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1AQ** to arrive by 31st December. It's going to be a heavy day, I can tell. All those competition entries to sort through in the Minion's Quest for Winners. And it's the ancient festival of HogMany in Ludlow that night — I know it sounds like something they have in Scotland on New Year's Eve, but it's a Minion Family Tradition to celebrate HogMany on 31st December. And no, I won't go into details here. . . .

RIDING ALONG ON THE CREST OF A WAVE . . .



The call came four days earlier. Did I want to attend the European Surfing championships in Rossnowlagh, Eire? A sudden vision of waves rolling under a blazing sun, bronzed surfers with their gleaming boards and blonde surfer girls in bikinis flashed through my mind. Yes, yes, yes . . . And there I was, waiting for the first tube of the day without a single bikini in sight.

But this is true journalism; flying visits abroad . . . okay, across the Irish Sea, but a journey into the unkown nevertheless. My passport was primed in my pocket, ready to flash at any officious immigration officers. Profession — reporter. I didn't need it once.

Five of us were flying out, courtesy of Irish newcomer to the software scene, New Concepts, who were launching their surfing simulation. Surfing? Listen, the only water I like is a wee drop with my scotch. I've listened to the Beach Boys in my time, but never forget that Brain Wilson was up in his room writing all their best tunes, not risking his neck in the waves.

The tube took longer than the flight. I celebrated touchdown with a breakfast glass of fresh orange juice, neatly spiked with vodka. After all, it was nine am and high time to prepare for the five hour drive to the Atlantic breakers. I already had a vision of that pale foam — yes, my first pint of Irish Guinness.

Time to introduce ourselves. Robbie from SID, the distributors, Paul from C&VG, and Bill and Jim from Sinclair User. And there was New Concepts' top man, Norman McMillan, a softly spoken and instantly likable chap with his fourteen year old son, Doug. Robbie and I were to travel in his car.

The cross country trek, surf boards attached to the roof, produced strange contrasts. Somehow, it was difficult to relate microchips to all those winding roads. And as we crossed the heavily armoured border, it was impossible to reconcile bloodshed and terror with the rolling green fields. We ate lunch in a cafe facing a blackened shell of a shop, advertising a 'Bomb Damage Sale.'

Here was a chance to quiz Norman. Why surfing? "I wanted to get into sports simulations but I wasn't sure how until June of last year." But do you surf? "Yes. For the last five years . . . all that wasted time," and he wasn't talking about the hours he had spent on the waves. But surely the swell isn't big enough in the sceptered isles. "I've ridden ten foot waves," so has Doug. I was in the company of fanatics and it was too late to stave off the inevitable invitation. "Would you like to try it?" I smiled sweetly. Not while I'm sober, thought I.

We arrived at the hotel just before dinner. It was like walking into a colony of Californians, a surreal gathering of bronzed, blonde young men and women who talked with American or Australian accents — even if they came from Sweden. I heard a rumour that they used Vim to get that sun bleached look. Not an application I'd recommend. Instead, I thought of inner comfort with that glass of Guinness.

During the evening, one thing became obvious. Surf is not a sport. It is a religion. The competitors formed a close knit community, bound by the search for the ideal wave. And that spirit began to communicate itself as I watched surfing videos and marvelled at the way they mastered the rolling ocean.

In the lounge, another contest was in full swing. New Concepts were offering a specially airbrushed surf board to the highest scorer in their simulation. Four televisions and rubber keyed Spectrums had been set up and knots of spectators cheered their team-mates on. The on screen surfer is controlled by a keyboard overlay, shaped like a surfboard, which responds to the position of your hand in much the same way as a real board responds to body weight. So pressure on the side makes you turn. Norman told me there was no way the game could be played via traditional means; twenty keys have to be read to calculate how you're positioned and allow for stunts like trailing your hands in the wake of the board. I made a mental note: "Let your fingers do the surfing."

I didn't get a chance to try my hand (an attempt at wit) that night but I did sample a few more pints, just to confirm my initial impression. It had been a long day and as I lay on my bed, the waves gently rocked it . . . or was it just that last Guinness?

Tuesday and up with the lark and a pounding head. Still, the sea breeze was bracing as I walked across to breakfast. There I was in for a nasty shock. "We'll be seeing you in the water today, then?" I vaguely remembered that while all around me were making excuses, last night the lure of the surf had overcome common sense and I had said I would have a go. Let this be a warning against the inebriating effects of Dutch Courage . . . sorry, Irish Guinness.

Luckily for me, but to the competitors' frustration, the sea was like a mill pond. Not enough to move a matchstick, let alone a six foot fibreglass surfboard. The blonde posse continued to whoop it up on the Spectrums until the time came to search for the swell, which gave us hacks a chance to get down to the programs.

I always find public demonstrations of my inability to master micro-games profoundly embarrassing. It took half an hour before I was able to paddle out, "porpoising" under the incoming surf that tried to sweep me back to the shore. Even then, I could only stay on the wave for a few seconds, gliding gracefully down and off the bottom. But at the next monitor, Sinclair User's Jim was proving himself to be a natural, performing a '360' — that's a complete turn on the spot. I made a note to buy him some Vim for his too-dark locks.

On the grounds that even inter-magazine rivalries fade between drinking partners, and

It's quarter to six on a cold Monday morning and I'm standing in a north London tube station waiting for a train to Heathrow. All the while, my body reminds me I should be at home in bed. Why am I here? Well, if anyone asks . . . Tell 'em I'm Surfing!

with bribes of promised pints, I squeezed into Bill Scolding's hire car. We failed to locate the beach where most of the competitors spent the morning paddling about on a serene sea (poetic huh) so we went on a detour to conduct another interview, of which more next month.

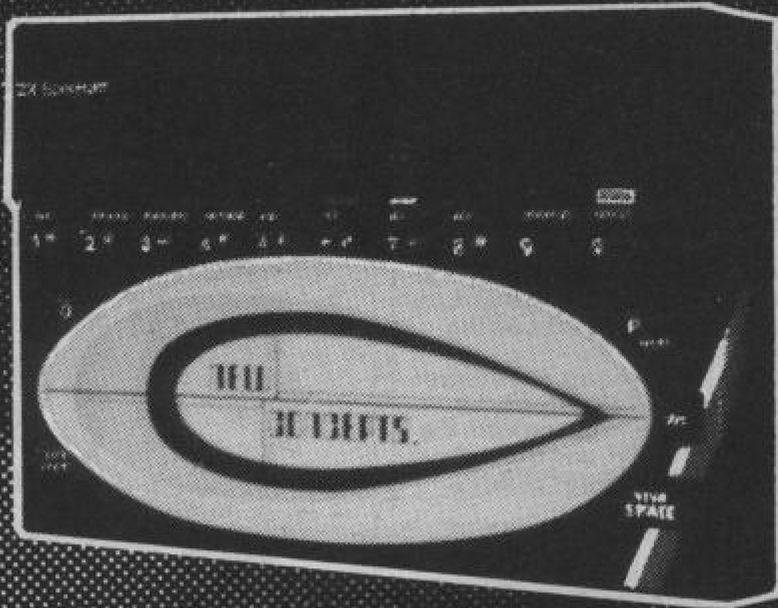
Later, re-united with the surfing fraternity, we actually saw some action, including our hosts Norman and Doug, gliding into the beach. As I scrambled down the headland to get some piccies, I again admired the grace of the wet suited figures, balanced on the narrow boards. Okay, so maybe I couldn't 'hang ten' (that's hang ten toes over the side of the board, for the uninitiated) but . . . well, it looked kinda fun.

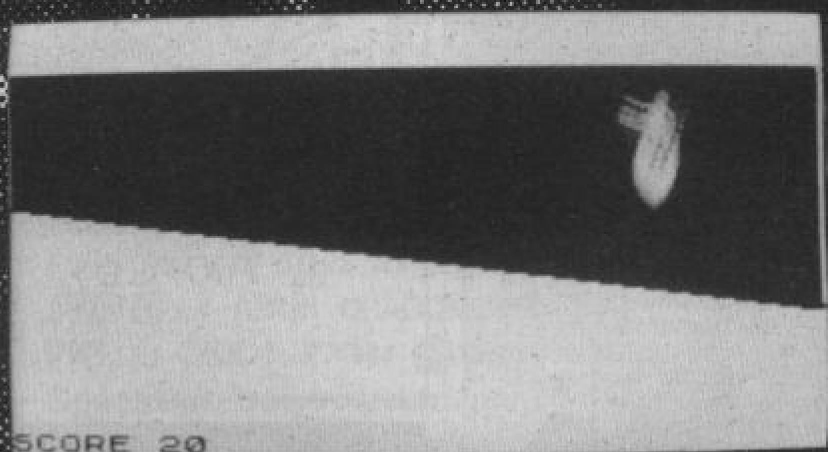
The evening ended at a celebratory dinner for the contestants and the New Concepts surf board was presented to Jed Stone of the English team. He was marked out of ten on the waves an while the micro mirrors the judging criteria it scores out of 100,000 — much more satisfactory for the arcade player.

Afterwards I cornered Jed, who was keen to sing the praise of the game's accuracy, but then again you'd expect him to — he was holding his gleaming new board. However members of other teams backed him up. New Concepts have taken a lot of care in this respect, even at the expense of some graphics sophistication, but there's a lot of science, from wave behaviour to human energy expenditure, being calculated. What really matters is that the mini surfboard provides a satisfying link between player and screen action.

Norman McMillan sees this as educational. "Sport is a relationship of body and mind — not something which has been properly addressed by computers except pressing buttons quicker, and that's finger exercise." You'll learn just as much as from choosing the right equipment for the conditions and discovering which are the best waves to ride. The higher the wave, the better your scoring potential, so it's worth waiting for one set of rather puny waves to pass and then catch the big one. Wave direction plays a part too, as on the left of the screen there are some rocks and you wouldn't want to get washed up on them, would you? Meanwhile, your energy is being used up and, while this shouldn't present any problem to the experienced surfer, the novice wearing only 'pods' (shorts) in the wintry water, won't last long. There's a lot of practice before you graduate from the stable, single fin boards to ones capable of riding off the lip and performing aerial manoeuvres before plunging back into the soup. But once more unto the bar, dear friends; once more unto the beer . . . and once more the feeling that surfing can't be that hard, can it?

The Surf Board overlay for the NEW CONCEPTS surfing simulation in place on the rubber keys — not as dramatic as waves, but nearly as much fun





An action screen, as you ride your board towards the shore in SURF CHAMP, from New Concepts

This time I've done it. Now there is no backing out. During the previous night's revelry, Jim said that he'd have a go. So now it was up to me to defend the honour of Newsfield. Luckily, I came down to breakfast with a handful of specially selected straws which ensured that he drew the short one first. It was nine am as he paddled out into the grey Atlantic, clad in Norman's wet suit. A thought: if he forgets to stop before he gets to New York, I won't have to go. But he turned. Another thought: will CRASH pay for my funeral? By the end of his turn, Jim was riding back to the shore, lying on his stomach.

Norman and Doug had been very disappointed with the sea. As I stood chest deep in salty water, I couldn't understand why. Each successive breaker lifted the board and I realised that my attempt to master the sea was somewhat less successful than Canute's. The Atlantic is BIG. "Get on the board and find your balance," Doug told me. Lying on a flat surface two feet wide shouldn't be much of a problem, but when the board has a life of its own because of the surging swell beneath it, it's a different matter. Many attempts and then, I had it. For five glorious seconds I was surfing on the wave . . . too soon, I was off. White water over my head and the board . . . stay low as it flew above me. Then a tug on my ankle from the leash and I was gasping to the surface.

It had not been an auspicious start. At least Jim hadn't been there to see me *walking* back to dry land and a warming whisky bottle. But did it matter? Not a bit. If we had not been rushing for a flight, I'd have been there until I got it right. On the way back, Norman told me of future plans, including a few finishing touches for the program. "Would I like to write some music?" You bet! And there will be prizes for people who break the high score. New beaches from around the world will be added to the program. Each beach has its own wave characteristics and one will include a 'tube' — that's when you surf along the hollow below the curving water. Most spectacular!

Okay, Norman, Doug, I'm hooked. One problem though, the only tubes we get in London are crowded during the rush hour. But I begged a pre-production copy of *Surf Champ* and since then I've learnt how to control the board as I ride the rubber keys of my micro. I've given up alcoholic excess, bleached my hair and changed my name to Christopher Wave. Like I said, surf is a religion — and I'm a convert. Surf's up!

John Minson



LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM

It's dark outside at going home time nowadays, which means that winter is definitely here. The wind is whistling round and through CRASH Towers as I write this and one or two people have been seen sporting fingerless gloves as they pound words into their keyboards and press joystick fire buttons.

An interesting selection of letters reaches me in the mailbag, and at last it seems the ban on poetry has sunk in. No plays, film scripts of synopses (LMLWD) of novels either please, while we're on the subject, otherwise keep the mail coming.

Ah — my turn on the wordprocessor has just come up, so I'll leave this intro in the carriage of my Hermes to annoy Robin Candy by flaunting my intro-writing skills in front of him, and get on with the letters. I've already picked LETTER OF THE MONTH, and the author didn't mention Design Design once! That's two months now. . . .

SEXIST SOFTWARE?

Dear Lloyd,
After printing the letter from Elizabeth Chatfield in your August issue, you asked her to reply and state what she thought would constitute a good game for girls. Well, as I am a girl (actually, I'm probably too old to be classified as a girl, but I am female), I thought I'd add my own ideas on the subject.

How about a platform game about a miner, and when he's made his fortune, there could be a sequel set in his newly acquired mansion. He could have a drunken orgy with his mates and litter the place with beer mugs. So feminine, is housework! Or how about setting a game on the moon? To make it more interesting and give it that female touch, there could be sweet little moon moles who eat cavern walls and wear dinky boots. As for adventures, the programmers could use favourite books as scenarios, such as Tolkein's works — whose books I have read again and again . . .

What's that? They've been done already? So there are games girls can play!

Seriously though, I imagine Elizabeth would like games based only on female subjects. I hope that there will never be a game based on a Barbara Cartland novel. Although I don't have them, there are games based on recipes or details for matching wine to different foods. How about *PSSST* which is based on the idea of growing flowers?

I do hope Elizabeth doesn't want two sets of games each, labelled for either girls or boys. We'll never be equal if this kind of segregation goes on.

Mrs Rhonda Sherman, High Wycombe, Bucks

My sister tells me that segregation isn't the cause of inequalities between the sexes — it's just that women are naturally superior. Not wishing to get into sexist arguments I'll say no more on the subject. I'm sure you're right Mrs Sherman, there's much more suitable subjects for computer games that Barbara Cartland novels. There are my novels for a start . . .

Anyone else care to contribute to the debate on software tailored for girls or boys?

Anyway, Mrs Sherman, you can choose £20 of software for boy, girls or just plain fun, because you are the author of Letter of the Month

LM

Surely not THE A. Daley? No can't be. And what's this Bob Geldorf bit? Candy would draw a much uglier picture of me, I'm sure. No A Daley comes from Nottingham, so it's not Arfur After All



JUMP FEVER

Dear potential patches of runny red stuff in a field

It gives me great pleasure, and I hope it always will.

Meanwhile, please accept this donation to the Prizey bit of the Competitiony bit — the corporate accountant wasn't too keen on this act of charity until we pointed out that it would make for extra weight and, who knows, a bigger hole (too TOO obvious to trot out the old 'Soft' landing line, don't you think?)

May we wish you fair skies, low winds and a fluffy cushion approximately 100 kilometres square . . .

Neil Hooper and the rest, Micromega

Many thanks for the games, Neil. It all helps to get WEEeeee Splat! off the ground. And not me, I hope

LM



CANDYMAN POORLY?

Dear Lloyd,
I am writing as a very worried Crash reader. Having seen the photo of Robin Candy in your magazine, I must ask you — is he well? From the picture, he seems to have a running nose. This has been the case since issue 15 when I first read the magazine. Now, in issue twenty, he still has the same steaming cold! Is there any hope for him?

He also appears to have bags under his eyes. Is his health and commitment killing him off? Should we begin a Robin Candy memorial fund now? When he retires can I have his job?
Ian Johnson, Great Bookham, Surrey

Very well indeed thank you. Far too fit, indeed, in that he is continually expanding his empire. I have to book time on the office wordprocessor now that Robin has started working for another magazine by the name of AMTIX! It's going to be a case of back to the Hermes before long . . .

All this business about bags under eyes and looking unhealthy just serves to reassure me that having one's photograph taken is not generally wise. Especially if someone goes and does clever arty things to it before printing it a magazine. I know (as part of his plans to take over the world which involves him starting in the office and working outwards), I know that Robin has never been entirely happy with the logo on his pages. Maybe something will change one day?

But enough of this Candy fellow.
LM

THE BITER BIT

Dear Mr Mangle,
A few quick points on old subjects. Firstly, I have just become sympathetic with those who disagree with cheating at games. My copy of *Cavelon* sticks an arrow in me even when the sword Excalibur is working. So now I know how the program feels. Also, who says you don't make up names. I had my bugs printed in the first issue and found I had become Martin Butcher and none of my friends believe they are mine.
Martin Butler, Mirfield, West Yorkshire

Exactly. It's time some caring soul spoke out on behalf of the programs themselves. Robin Candy has been allowed to get away with too much program mutilation and torture. Never mind though, at least your friends will believe you wrote a letter.
LM



That's as may be, but surely these people never queue at the SAME newsagent. Do they? Neil Richards thinks they might. . . .





There's many a true word spoken in jest. Now Jon Peachey proves that the same goes for drawings. If you see what I'm getting at. Anyone who can include all my ancestors in one Bug Box deserves to win the December £20 of software

WHAT, ME? A HYPOCRITE?

Dear Crash,
Piracy is the subject on most computer owners' minds. Many good little boys and girls write in to say how they think piracy is immoral and how they would never do it. If they are telling the truth, they are either very rich squares or they don't have many games. I have over 150 games, only one of which is an original.

Piracy is a vast subject which I don't claim to have the answer to, but I do have a few ideas which I think might cut down on the amount of pirated games. Firstly, the price of games; they are far too expensive. The average game costs around £6-7 and it is now becoming the 'in' thing to have games packaged at or above the £10 mark. If software companies cut their prices — even by half, then their sales would more than double, making the companies more of a profit. Everyone would be happy. Software houses would enjoy the money making while the buyers would get good games cheaper and if they thought the game they purchased was bad, they would not feel cheated out of so much money. Even pirates would be pleased because there would be more games about, increasing their chances of getting a copy.

I know that there is a lot of work put into games, but think about how much more work and money goes into producing and launching a record. Yet they are sold for £5. Just think how many more games titles a software house produces at their higher prices. They should easily be able to experiment with their prices.

My second point is about hyperloads. I know they were supposed to prevent piracy, but all they have prevented is the copying of games by use of normal tape copiers. Yet there are now copiers capable of handling hyperloads, so why continue? They haven't stopped tape to tape copying on stereos. All they have managed to do is make the games more difficult to load for the people who actually paid for them. If they can only get a game to load occasionally, then they will be discouraged from buying such a game in the future. Come on software companies, think again.
J Robson, Millhouses, Sheffield

You Cannot BE SERIOUS! Off you go, telling us how piracy could be reduced by cutting the price of games when you've only actually spent money on one game in your entire life? If CRASH Smashes were sold for 50p each I get the feeling you'd probably still pirate them, putting half a dozen on a C90.

The logic of your argument just doesn't hold true. If software houses halve the price of games, you say, more people would buy them. But the pirates would still be happy because there would be more games about, you add. Inferring that they would still be pirating away merrily, with the "boring squares" forking out the loot just the same. Twice as many games sold, each game making half the profit means a lot more work for no more money. And who's going to pay the rent at the software companies if this "buy one, pirate one hundred and fifty" idea catches on — or should they pirate premises, electricity and food so they can bring you free games? Come on J Robson, think again.
LM

PROVOCATIVE STUFF

Dear Crash,
I just thought I'd put pen to paper on the subject of the software†hardware† firmware scene, especially concerning the Spectrum. There is no doubt that the Spectrum has been the most successful home computer ever produced, with one of the biggest software backups for any home computer. What we must ask ourselves though, is the question, 'Is biggest really best?'

What I am trying to say is that you and your readers regularly slag off the Spectrum's rivals, even though many of them have superior graphics and sound capabilities. This is because nobody wants to admit they might have bought a second rate home computer. So, when they see a fantastic game running on another machine, they immediately defend the Spectrum by stating how much better† bigger† faster that game would be on their computer.

A good example of this is the letter you printed in issue 18 which put forward many valid points on how your magazine could be improved if you toned down your artwork a bit. Yet all your faithful readers immediately jumped down his throat saying, 'How dare he criticise our wonderful Spectrum magazine. All of us faithful readers should stick together and pansies† fascists† aliens like him should not be allowed to read our mag.'

The Spectrum owners reacted like that because really, the machine has practically run its course and will soon be overtaken by superior machines. They are naturally scared about being left with a redundant machine. This happened with the ZX81, VIC 20 and will happen to all the present range of home computers eventually, as technology advances.

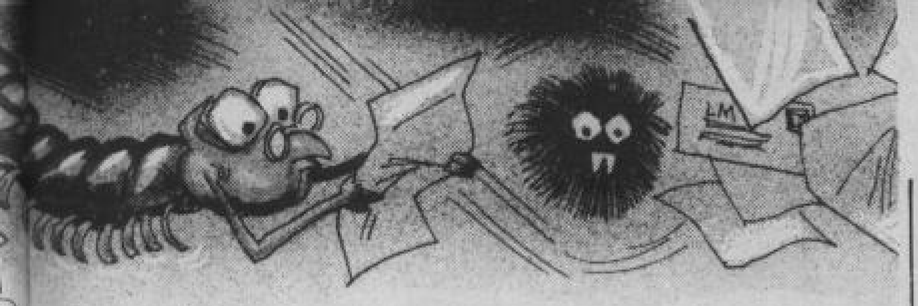
So I conclude this letter by saying make the most of your computer now, as in two or three years time, the Spectrum, BBC, C64 etc will all be part of history and bigger, better and faster computers will be the order of the day.
Jeremy Connor, Tyne and Wear

The results have not yet come back from the handwriting analysis laboratory yet, so I can't be sure ... You talk of a person who wrote a letter in issue 18, (one Jeremy Connor from Tyne and Wear) in the third person. Could there be two Jeremy Connors? Or are you just pretending to be two people?

Yes, most of the inter-machine rivalry is silly. Without doubt there are games which work better one machine rather than another, but it's all very much swings and roundabouts at the end of the day.

No doubt technology will continue to advance, but there comes a time when you have to sit back and decide where you, as a consumer, are going to call a halt. I'm still happiest with my typewriter, for instance, even though in the interests of efficiency I have to book time on the office word processor nowadays. But I still write at home on my Hermes: just because something is "made obsolete" by techno-advances doesn't mean it isn't still loved and used.

Is the Spectrum doomed, or is it now so well established that it's going to hang on for a very long time? Let's hear from readers — there's one opinion on the matter next.
LM



ONGOING UPGRADE SITUATION?

Dear Lloyd,
I was very interested to read Tim Kean's comments on the 'ever deteriorating world of the home computer.' I also work in a home computer shop and the days when you could sell ten computers in a day have long gone; yet there is still hope. Machines like the Spectrum, Amstrad, C64 have firmly established themselves in the marketplace as the most popular machines. The consumer has been tempted with MSX as an industry standard but this has failed.
Spectrums and C64's are slowing down in sales but there is going to be a new C128 and Spectrum 128 in the Spring. Both of these will have what most people consider important when buying a new machine — Software support. I think the next few years will take off again after the slight depression; keep all your hardware and software but upgrade your machine and still be able to run all your games.
Finally I'd like to know why Ocean advertise games like *Rambo* that haven't even been written yet?
William Robertson, West Wickham, Kent

There's a piece of advice. I knew I was right to hang on to the Hermes.
Are you sure it's not written yet?
LM

TRAVELLER'S TALE

Dear Lloyd,
I know it's pretty unlikely this letter will be printed, but anyway I have a complaint to make about Firebird's *Elite*. All the weapons (beam and pulse lasers, ECM systems), cargo details and planet information (like the tech levels 1-15 and the political states) are completely ripped off from the role playing game *Traveller* from Game Designers' Workshop. *Elite* is a great game and deserves all the success it gets, but surely GDW should get some credit for all the ideas they gave the authors, since obviously they played or saw *Traveller*. If I'm completely wrong, then I'll eat my next copy of Crash (don't worry I'll buy another). Oh yes, please cut down the drawings in the letter section since they make the magazine look really juvenile.
Adam Locks, Thascted, Essex.

The new role playing game expert in the office, Sean the Leprichaun, assures me that resemblances are indeed borne. I've not seen Traveller, *so can't comment but maybe someone else might like to? The next issue of CRASH will be the Christmas Special, so you could have a real feast on your hands if you're proved wrong!*

THE LONG WAIT

Dear Lloyd,
After being introduced to Crash by a friend, the first few months of my loyal readership involved going to John Menzies every thirty days and forking out my 85p. Then, after buying the July issue I saw the amazing subscription offer. I dutifully sent off my order asking for *Blue Max* and *Streethawk*. I waited in anxious expectation and was delighted with the excellent service provided by your mail order department.
Blue Max has arrived but of course *Streethawk* has not. The thought that Newsfield Publications were trying to con me out of seven hard earned pounds was the last thing to cross my mind, but is *Streethawk* ever going to get pushed through my letter box or did Ocean waste all that money by advertising in your incredit you reviewed *The Rats* twice, once by Sean Masterson and again by Derek Brewster. Over enthusiasm? Or don't Sean and Derek talk to each other? (this reinforces my view that the whole Crash team are but a figment of a mad computer called C.R.A.S.H — Clever Reviewer And Superb Hacker).
After saying all that, keep up the standard you have set and well done for your new Letter of the Month prize.
Philip Bichard, Long Marston, Herts.

I think you might find that Issue 16 was the last time "Debugging" made an appearance in the Trail. It may well have escaped the notice of the chaps in Art Room, up in the draught eaves of CRASH Towers — and an internal memo in triplicate is winging its way to them. CRASH: the magazine not afraid to Name The Guilty Men.
The Ratty duplication was deliberate, however and has been done before when it appears that two opinions on a game, from two slightly different perspectives were justified. Face it, if it was all put together by a mad computer, slip ups like this wouldn't occur. We all now how infallible computers are, now don't we?
LM





A complete family of Adventure reviewers, in a group portrait that owes a little to Wally Week's gatherings. EVERYONE's A DEREK, from Steve Carter of Romford

MICKEY KEYNES

Dear Crash,
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE tell me why people take the Mickey out of Milton Keynes? There is nothing wrong with this city and it is a pleasant and peaceful place to live. People like R Hogg of Swansea (SWANSEA — where's that?) just don't appreciate a decent city when they hear about one. Mind you, I can't wait for R Hogg to bring out his adventure, *Like a Virgin*. I would certainly buy it. Anyway, before you laugh at Milton Keynes, come and see it. I'm sure it would change your minds.
P Chaney, Bletchley, Milton Keynes

HUNTING FOR THE TRUTH

Dear Lloyd,
I am writing because I thoroughly disagree with the letter by I Hunter (issue 20) on the qualities of a game that should be made a CRASH Smash. What does he mean by saying 'There is no point is superb graphics if the first screen is impossible or difficult to get through?' Surely no one would want to get through the first screen if the graphics weren't superb. And anyway, no screen can be impossible to do!

While discussing the prices of games, he also mentions the companies Firebird and Mastertronic and states that £9.00 is a high price to pay for certain games. This is true, but surely for a mega fab game that has a lasting appeal of two months it is better than paying £2.00 for a poorly packaged game which has a lasting appeal of 3 Hours. Okay, so *Booty* and *Finders Keepers* are excellent games but can you think of any more from these companies that are? No? Neither can I!

I totally agree with all other points made though. Did he write *Loderunner* or something? Before I stop I'd like you to answer this question; Why are all CBM 64 games usually £2.00 dearer than Spectrum ones? Is it because they are of higher quality? Ah well, I suppose I'd better stop now.
Gary Dring, Stamford, Lincs.

Hmm. A straw poll of the office comes up with 1) C64 owners have more money, and can be charged more; 2) it takes longer and involves more effort to program the 64 (music, remember); 3) 64 software producers have worked out that they can make more money this way and get away with it; 4) it's all to do with the phase of the moon 5) I think I'd better stop now, too.
LM

LOST IN THE CROWD

Dear Lloyd,
Please could you tell me why the slogan of CRASH subscriptions is 'Get your copy ahead of the crowd'. I subscribe and get my copy at least three days after my friends who don't.
Andrew Wilson, Dartford, Kent.

Ah, but we never said which crowd! No, there have been some problems — mainly that some newsagents have been getting early copies of CRASH owing to first rate efficiency on the part of the distributors. Sometimes we were dodging the traffic warden and unloading copies of the magazine delivered a day before it became available. And then, on occasions, the printers didn't send quite enough copies, although we had asked very nicely . . .

Anyway, things should get better as the powers that be have taken the pressure off Auntie Sally and the mail order team and sent the job out of house. A firm in London will be servicing subscriptions, starting this issue — so if you've still got a problem, let us know.
LM



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Hungry Bugs — a little strip courtesy of James Harris from Cleveland

COMPARISON CORNER

Dear Lloyd,
I own a Spectrum 48K and a Commodore 64 and buy both Crash and Zzap!64 every month. Here is a comparison:
1) Crash Forum vs Zzap! Rrap
9.25/10 9/10
Excellent. The letters are generally good. Loads of space for letters, much more than other magazines (Crash 9 pages, Zzap! 64 6 pages, the most number of letter pages in other magazines is 3 pages). Crash also publish cartoons which makes Crash Forum a touch better than Zzap! Rrap.

2) Playing tips vs Zzap! Tips
9/10 8.5/10
The best thing since sliced bread. There are loads of tips every month for many new games. The tips in Crash are newer and there is no Mini Tips dept in Zzap, so catch up Zzap!.

3. Hall of Slime vs The Scorelord Speaketh
6/10 9/10
The Scorelord Speaketh is by far the best. This is because different scores on one game are grouped together under the game name. Hall of Slime lists different games under the scorers names which is useless. Zzap! challenge is great, a first class idea!

4. Signpost vs Clever Contacts
8/10 5/10
Clever Contacts don't give much help on adventures and the help given is either too vague or you have to send off for it. Signpost gives solutions, not tips and each is given in Brewster Code to save people knowing answers to newly bought adventures.

5. Crash Reviews vs Zzap! Reviews
10/10 9.5/10
Brill! Trif! Fab! Firstly the details on game play, scenery and aim of the game are great! The length of the reviews are long, not just long, I mean LONG, but Crash have comments, Zzap! doesn't but they do have sound percentage.
Lee Parton, Swansea.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? someone once wrote. I suppose you'll have to buy an Amstrad and read AMTIX! now Lee, if you want to carry on comparing. This could get expensive, especially when Newsfield Publications starts a magazine for Cray 2 users!
LM

HUSHED ACTION

Dear Lloyd,
A few weeks ago I bought the game *Way of the Exploding Fist.* I was amazed at how good it was. The other night I went for a go on my cousin's Commodore 64. We played the same game and though it wasn't up to Spectrum standard it did play a lovely tune to you while you got on with the game. I was wondering why the Spectrum did not have this music. Not enough K or something?
James Close, Derby

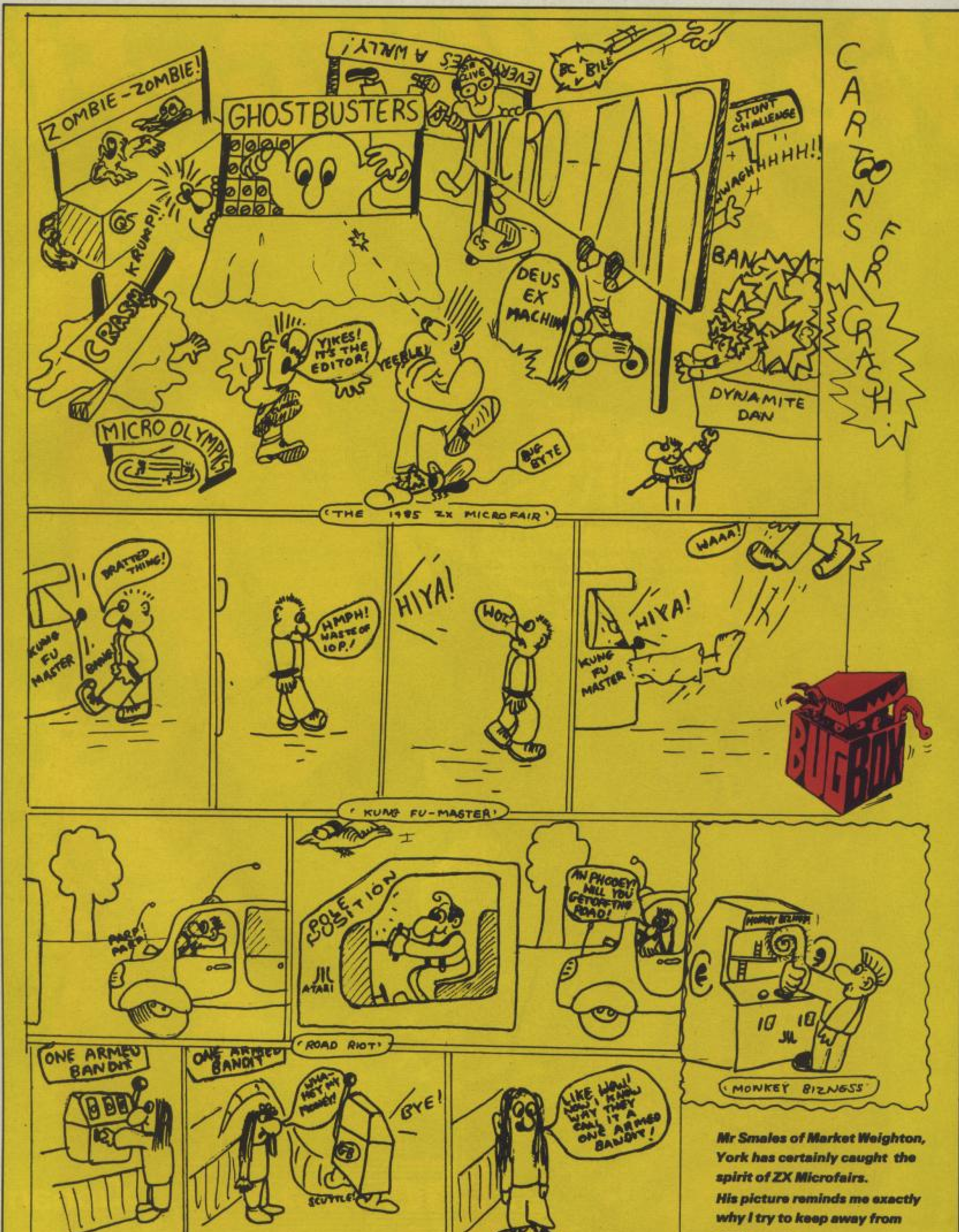
Or something
LM

Dear Lloyd,
I have some ideas on what would make Crash better:
1) Print games listings.
2) Have more cartoons.
3) Stick the middle pages in harder.
4) Print photos of yourself.
5) Have more Robin Candy.
6) Let Jeremy Spencer do a monthly article about Zoids.
7) Turn Signpost into pictures only.
8) Get rid of Derek Brewster.
9) Have more posters.
10) Have more slime.
If you refuse to even consider these things you will have lost a reader and I will have no *Dun Darach* and *Finders Keepers* (hint hint!).
Alex Nowforth, Fulwood, Preston

Consider them considered.
LM


Yie Ar KUNG~FU
Imagine
..the name of the game
Konami





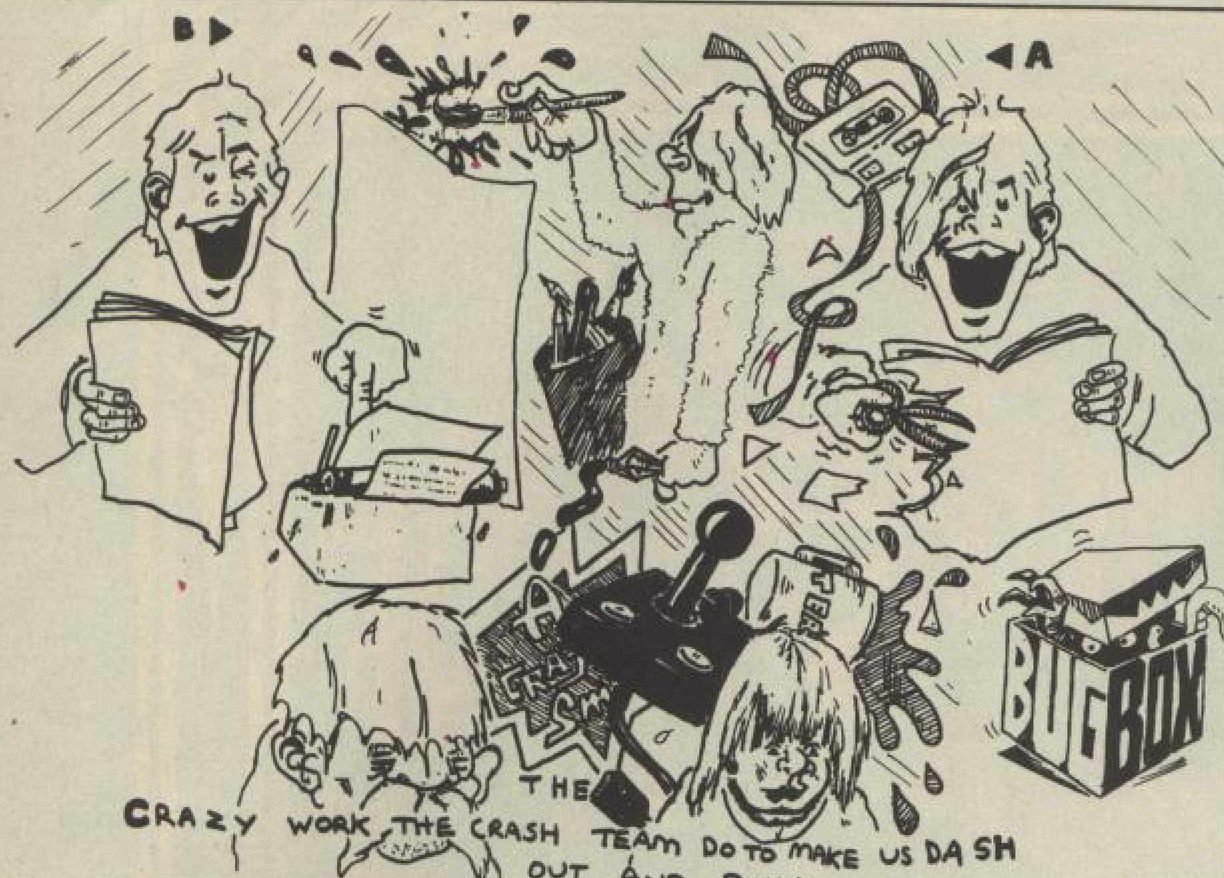
Mr Smales of Market Weighton, York has certainly caught the spirit of ZX Microfairs. His picture reminds me exactly why I try to keep away from such events

48K SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM



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Perhaps a little derivative of the MAD style, a fold up cartoon from a reader who must remain anonymous. Mainly because he or she forgot to add a name or address

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Dear Lloyd,
My tale is a tearfull one, for over 4 months I have been desperately trying to get a mention in CRASH. Every time my CRASH arrives I rush to the door in hopeful anticipation only to find my dreams shattered by the absence of my name in yet another CRASH.

I have entered every competition there has been and still no mention. Oh woe is me, life is not worth living anymore. I'm on the verge of a mental breakdown. Until a week ago I though I was the only one with this terrible problem until I saw Martin sobbing by the letter box as he posted his millionth letter to CRASH. Now there are two of us in this terrible state. Help us, please.
Mark Blachmore and Martin Baker

Oh allright then, just this once. Think of it as an early Christmas pressie, OK?
LM



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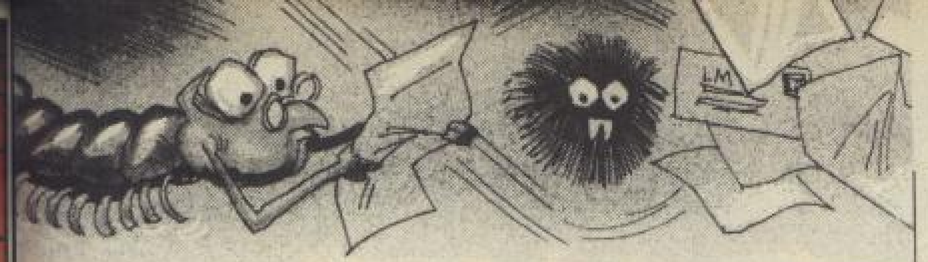
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Derek's a popular subject this month. Not so sure that A Mason will be so popular with Derek for this little portrait, tho'

MOAN, GIBBER. COMPLAIN

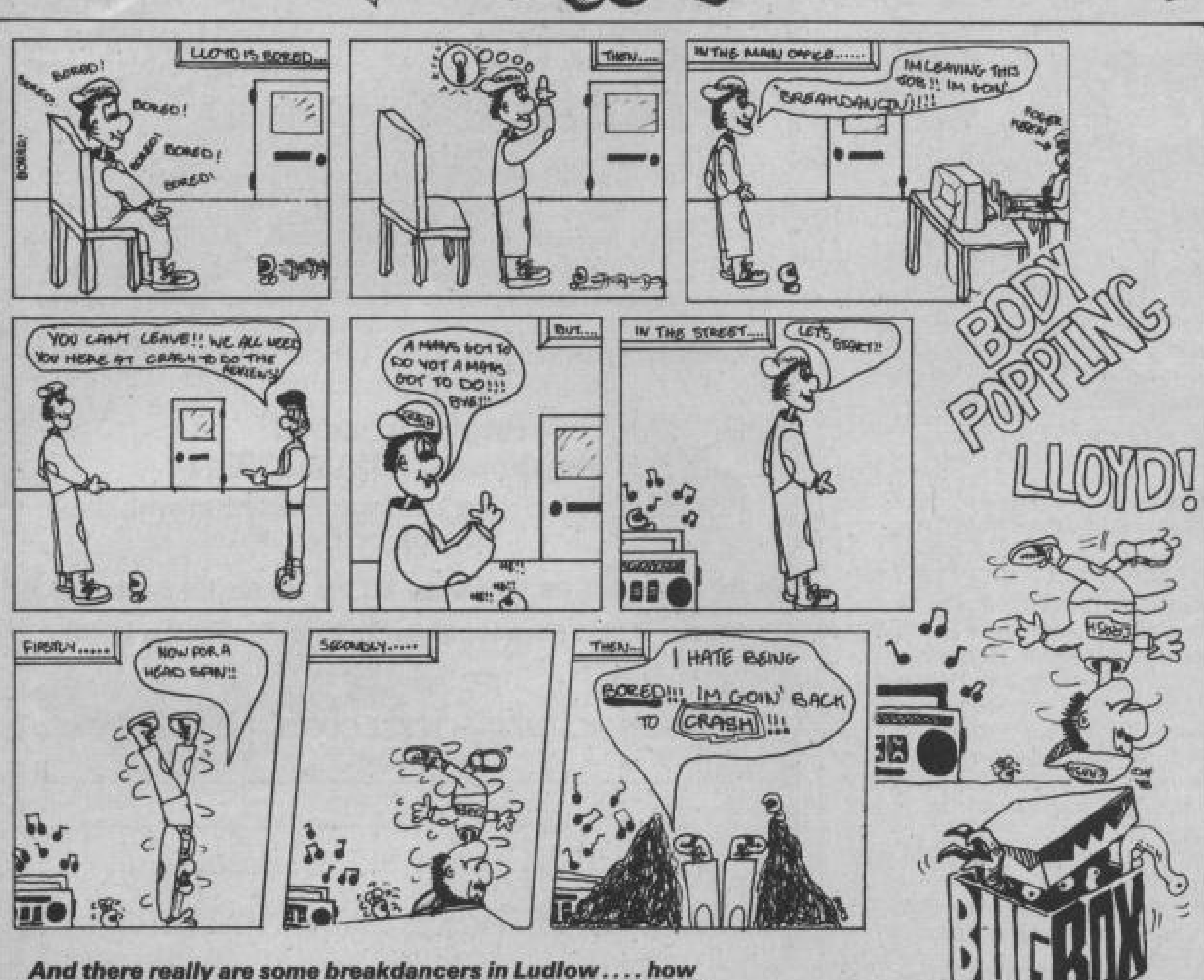
Dear Lloyd,
I would like to write, having just looked over my latest CRASH (21) I must say 'Oh Dear!'. My word, only 19 reviews (compared to approximately 50 in issue one). I realise this may not be your fault with game manufacturers waiting till Christmas, but where is *Komplex City* and such like?

I must say that I found your letters column just about the worst I've seen. The star letter would not have been printed only a few months ago (well it might have, but not as star letter). Also, the playing tips are not expanding, why not? Most of your readership (I think) want more. Next point:

Blasphemy!! (disbelief! Horror!)! I quote: 'apart from the usual drop in graphical qualities' (*Bounty Bob Strikes Back*). Well, I say unto you: Graphics on the Spectrum are not worse, colours are not graphics. Look at *Highway Encounter*. The CBM cannot handle those graphics routines. Why do you think Ultimate don't transfer *Knight Lore*? (by the way you gave use of colour poor on *Dambusters*. The colour is as good as the CBM version). Look at *Way of the Exploding Fist*, there is more animation and the characters are better designed. Next point: Why do software houses insist on putting games in such crappy packages? *Everyone's a Wally*- My God! I get home and the box falls to bits instantly! Beyond's are not much better. Use either Imagine type boxes (nice looking) or *Beach Head II* type boxes because they fit in conventional cassette tape holders.
S. Griffin, Reading, Berks.

At the risk of being boring again, here's a few answers to the points you raise.
1) You could be right — games have been flooding in in the last couple of weeks. Games take longer to develop nowadays, partly because so much more effort goes into them, which might go part of the way to explaining why there are less games available for review. As to Komplex City, ask Legend
2) There's no accounting for taste. The Candy Empire is expanding daily. Even as I write, he has just made a bid for the beermat I stand my mug of tea on.
3) I'm assured that the C64 most certainly could — and could scroll the graphics too. But this kind of argument is not very constructive
4) Nice things come in all sorts of packages
LM





And there really are some breakdancers in Ludlow . . . . how ever did Matthew Dalby of Dulverton in Somerset guess. Not that I'll be joining them, though



A very hirsute (LM's LWD) collection of CRASH staffers, courtesy of James Mindham of Norfolk

Dear Lloyd Mangram,
Have had some kind of brainstorm? Been spending too much time down the pub? Don't look so innocent. You know what I mean.

Giving letter of the month and all that free software to that grade A wally from Cyprus is what I mean.

This guy drives 35 miles down a mountain and then 35 miles back up on the off-chance that the newsagents have got a copy of Crash. He then does it again, just to be on the safe side.

Has he never heard of telephones? I mean he works in one of those recently very much discussed 'secret listening posts'. There must be a phone. Instead he thrashes up an down mountains for over 140 miles — at least. What an absolute wally. He's lucky he can walk and talk at the same time. (And I cleaned that up.)

Then you some along and give him a prize! Dear oh dear oh dear. (And I cleaned that up too.)

If this is the standard of our armed forces, protecting the nation from foreign nasties, then God help us all.
Incidentally, Ben Nevis is a touch over 4,000 feet high, which is not even close to your estimate.

Sharpen up Mangram and give the letter of the month to those who deserve it.
Alan W Mackie, Glasgow.

Now you now I'm not the sort to go down the pub. I leave the drinking of Old Flatulence Bitter to the likes of coarse fellows like the Editor and the competition minion (they're always drinking together). I prefer Martinis, Dry, Straight Up.

Perhaps the newsagent in Cyprus hasn't got a telephone. Not everyone in this country has one, so why assume so in Cyprus. Anyway, Government Funds shouldn't be squandered on eavesdropping on Cypriot newsagent's to find out whether CRASH has arrived, I'm sure you'll agree.

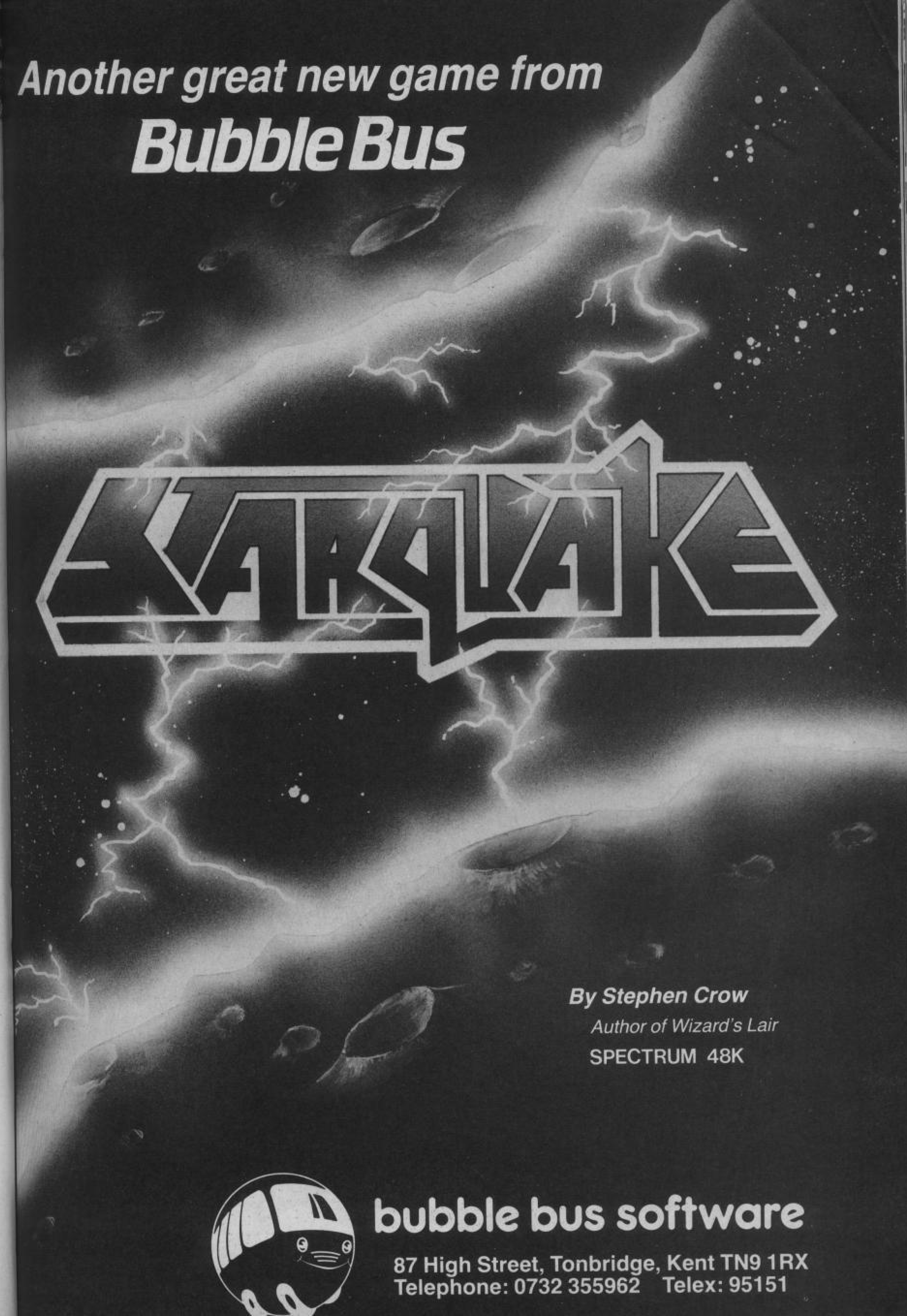
That's it. The giant eggtimer's just about to run out, so my turn on the wordprocessor is about to come to an end. It's daft this system — it's worse than booking a squash court at a busy club. I wonder if we could network a couple of Hermes typewriters . . . .

Just so I can fill my next booking on this infernal machine, make sure you send your letters to CRASH FORUM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB

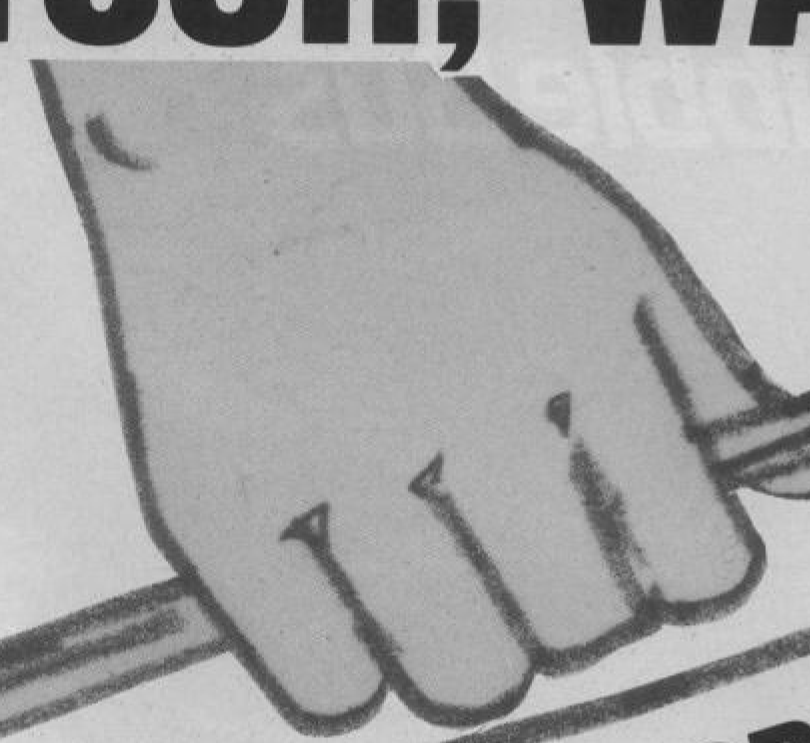
ALTERNATIVE VIEWPOINT

Dear Sir,
I am writing on behalf of the British Sado Masochist division for the prevention of cruelty to whips. Issue 18's cover was degrading and cruel. The whip drawn by the sadistic Mr. Frey had obviously been cruelly overused and should have been replace years ago. If you do not tell the lady in the picture to start tightening up on her overall standards you shall be hearing from our solicitor and I will confisticate the whip in question.
Mr Michael R Sutton W.H.I.P., Harrowgate, North Yorks.

That was this month's token loonie
LM


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ELLO TOSH, WANTA



Your Chance To Win A "Ghettoblaster" in CRL's TAU

Your mission in TAU CETI, CRL's latest game, is to deactivate a very complex and terribly aggressive robot defence system. Gary Liddon (who used to make tea at Domark and now makes a mess in CRASH Towers) also has a complex defence system. Ask him to review a game, write about a game or in fact do anything bar read 2000AD comics and wait for his next meal, and his defence system swings into play. "I was just . . . ", he says, where . . . is something he was finishing or about to start.

But even this corpulent lummock was moved to action when we loaded *Tau Ceti* up in front of his catatonic form (LM's Long Word Dictionary, Vol 1 A-F). His eyes lit up, and brushing a few stray morsels of the breakfast he'd just finished munching for the third time — or was is the third time he'd been munching breakfast that morning — he became transfixed by the game. Mr Liddon Liked *Tau Ceti*. He played it and like it and liked it and played it. He liked it so much that he forgot to go and eat his lunch. Now there's an idea. Perhaps we ought to have a new category for real star games, games that are really stunning. Games that LIDDON LEAVES LUNCH for. Hmmmmm.

To celebrate the launch (*Lunch?* — **ED**) of their new piece of software, a veritable LLL of a game, CRL are giving away a Toshiba RT7025 portable Radio Cassette Recorder with detachable speakers, a three-band graphic equaliser and a couple of free blank tapes thrown in as well to the winner of this competition. There are twenty copies of game itself on offer to runners up, too, so don't get disappointed if you don't get top prize.

..." in CRL's TAU CETI Compo

...TOSHIBA?

...CETI Compo

Your Chance To Win A "Ghettoblaster"

Here's five straightforward questions for you to have a go at answering:

1) What is the name of the fellow who programmed *Tau Ceti*?

2) What sort of craft do you whizz round in during the game?

3) How many times do the words "TAU CETI" appear in this edition of CRASH? (Heh, heh! **—Comp Minion**)

4) What do the initials CRL stand for then, eh?

5) What have *Juggernaut* and *Tau Ceti* got in common?

Crash Competition

PLAYING TIPS from ROBIN CANDY

By the time you read this, Christmas time will almost be upon us and with it a whole host of new games to provide hints, tips and pokes for. But with the arrival of the Mikro-Plus this column could be under going quite a few changes. When I give hints away on games most people still need pokes to give them extra lives etc in order for them to finish the game. With the advent of Mikro-Plus pokes will be a thing of the past because the EPROM inside the interface takes over the Spectrum's ROM so there is no BASIC. As a result, if you can't complete a game that uses Mikro-Plus then it's tough. The only nice feature about Mikro-Plus is that it allows you to save the tape part of the game to Microdrive.

Mikro-Gen's advertisements in the trade press boast of beating the pirates but I would venture to suggest that the £15 price mark carried by Mikro-Plus games is likely to do more damage to sales than the pirates ever could. Sales figures show that generally the good games sell in reasonable quantities, while the mediocre ones don't. This is mainly because the average pirate likes to buy good games, while the mediocre games are copied. The pirates don't want the poor games — but if they can get them for free . . .

Recently, many companies have spent far too long on protecting their programs. If a game is on tape and a pirate has got a decent tape to tape set, then it is copyable. All protection routines do is inconvenience the user who's tape deck is a bit dodgy and prevent the odd hacker from finding out pokes. If only the Software Houses would wake up to the fact that pokes for cheating at games are doing more good than harm.

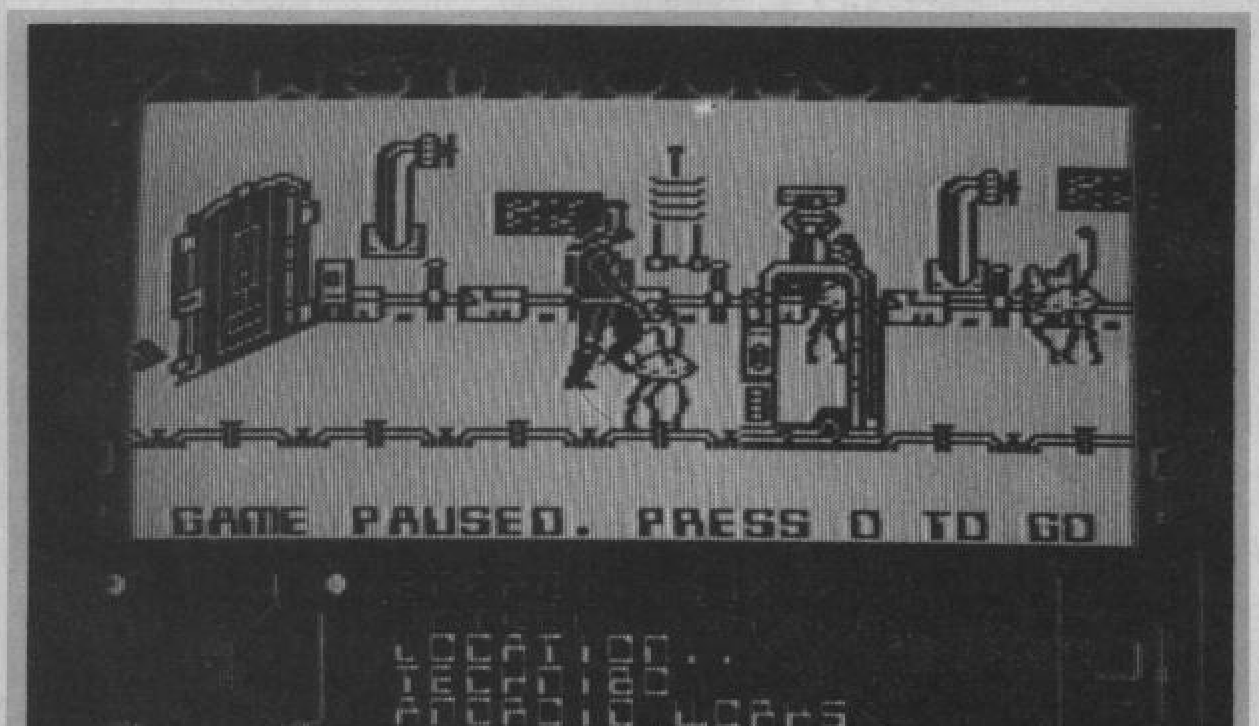
Only time will tell whether Mikro-Plus is going to be a success or not but as long as it remains at £15 it is going to be short lived.

With that said there should be a Pokes Special in the Christmas edition of CRASH which will feature cheats for games such as Fairlight, Gyron, Fighting Warrior plus many more! Also next month there will be the usual assortment of tips and hints etc. At the moment I am on the lookout for information on Tau Ceti, Elite (the special missions), Robin O' the Wood and Grumpy Gumphrey.

Ok then, that seems to be a long enough intro so on with the tips!

ASTROCLONE

Last month saw the last of the series of Dragontorc tips so to fill the gap left behind Steve Turner (the programmer of Astroclone) generously gave me some tips for his latest creation. Just to liven up the reading material they are done in the form of a story, so even if you don't have the game you might like the story. Detailed below are the solutions for two of the bases.



TECHNIBO ANDROID WORKS

After a short but deadly struggle the Astroclone assault ships fought their way through to their first target, the Technibo Android Works. The ruins left behind were once the robotic droid manufacturing plant of the Sei. The craft slowly, gently, docked with the alien satellite; manipulating the transporter controls the first clone beamed down, laser on standby. The base's defences sprang to life; these consisted of spider-like droids who, though the were unarmed, were deadly if they caught hold of a clone with their mechanical grapple devices. One such droid possessed a spanner which, when inserted into a terminal, shut down the launch systems as the terminals shorted out one by one. "That put a spanner in the works" the Clones' mind simultaneously mused.

The Clone manoeuvred throughout the base and stumbled across a room guarded by several droids inside which was the Gravition Device, a radio like object. Once the clone had obtained this, through precision use of his laser pack, it was able to retrieve a sonic key from a grill in the floor through which it had fallen. This key was used to open an Isocase: for the uninitiated this is a curious device which can hold a number objects that are many times its outward shape. Searching through the box the Clone discovered a Transmat card which, after much experimentation, was found to operate the beam point from Technibo if inserted into the correct terminal. While journeying through the base several enemy turrets were discovered but these proved no match for the Clone's quick-draw gun usage.

The lower level was penetrated; a message discovered informing of an invisible pass carried by a droid. Once the droid, behind a locked door, had been destroyed, a Visiray that lay beside the message revealed the pass. To open the door a Securipass formerly owned by another droid was inserted into the security panel. Also in the locked room was a message.

It appears that the Sei assault force perished in Syncron HQ after issuing a last, desparate, message, informing how they left six more messages hidden in Syncron HQ. The clone returned to the ship with the HQ pass, which had been revealed by the Visiray, to battle the Seiddab in order to find Syncron HQ.

ALTOS

Fierce resistance was met in the Quadrant Command base. A deadly laser battle erupted between the assault clones and the defending Securidroids. Deep within a complex of crystal caves enemy snappers lay in wait, quietly dropping on unsuspecting clones as they entered. Progress was halted by two warp devices that when touched transported the Astroclone to a terminal room where Securidroids waited, guns activated. The multi-mind of the Astroclones computed that a an object of sufficient mass dropped on the warp fields would deactivate them. A rock proved to be the object required. The Astroclones cautiously explored.

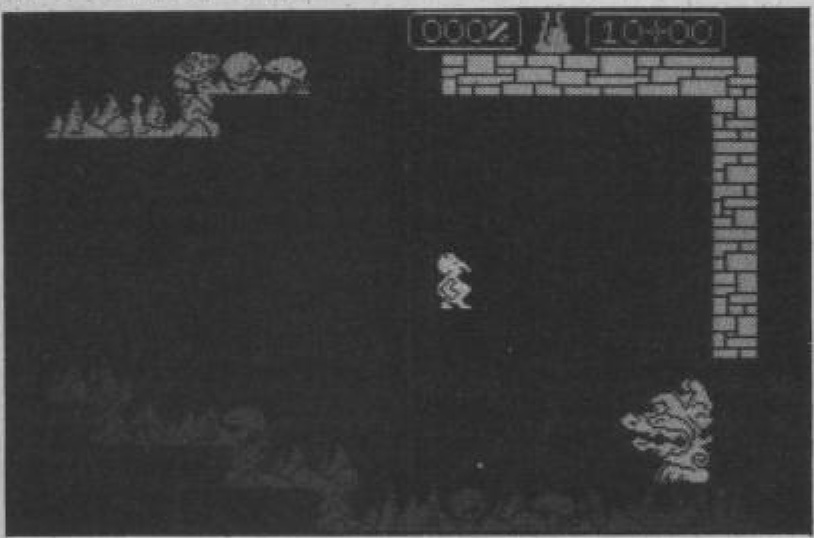
On entering a large cavern they were attacked by three armoured mine-droids. Defence was futile. Laser fire glanced off their hardened exoskeletons. The clone darted into a nearby chamber where a force field nearly drained him of life. As the pursuing droids entered, the clone braced himself for attack. Positioning himself behind the force field he waited.

In order to eliminate their



target the droids crossed the force field, with devastating effects. More of the same type of droids were found and despatched in a similar way. As one of the droids evaporated in to the field, a thermal lance was left behind. Stumbling on a locked security door the Astroclones pondered the problem. The answer lay in the message in Syncron. If only it could be found. In an attempt to remove a crystal attached to the floor of a crystal cave the Clone used a thermal lance. To his surprise the crystal shattered, revealing a Sonic key that had formed a perfect crystal having lain undisturbed for 2 millenia. The key opened another Isocase. On further examination the case was found to contain a destruct program. This was loaded into the launch computer and the base shut down. Another terminal gave no result. What was its program? Perhaps the answer was in Syncron.

RIDDLERS DEN



Stuck in Electric Dreams first game? If you are, then look at the goodies printed below; they may help you out of your dilemma.

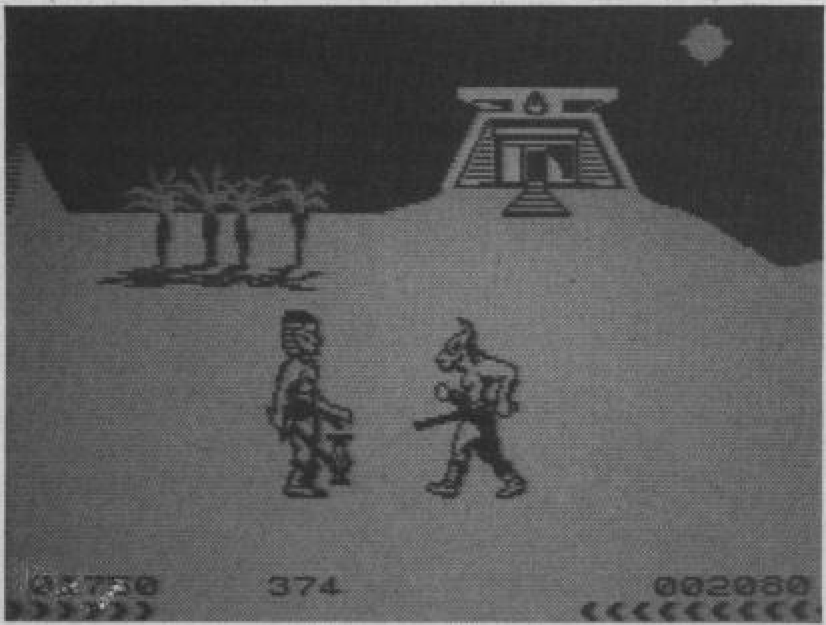
If you want to pass the flashing Gargoyle you need the TCP. Once you have got this go to the screen that has the Gargoyle on it and drop the TCP above ol' badbreath. To pass the Spider you need the coat of arms which lies behind the Red dragon. Find the Red dragon statue (look behind the gargoyle) then take this and drop it on the screen with the Red Dragon. Leave the room, go back in again and you will be able to pass the dragon. If you want to cross the the impassable river then cross it at 15:30 (banks close then).

HACKER

Activision's latest game is a bit perplexing but if you're having any problems then read on, because Brian Wells of Hampshire has sent in some tips.

When you are asked for the password to Log on then type in AUSTRALIA and you will now be in the map screen. The first place to go to is Paris. Here give the spy £1 and in return he will give you a piece of the shredded document. Now take the chronograph and the deed to the Swiss Chalet. Once this has been done, go to London and give the Spy there a chronograph and he'll give you another piece of the shredded document. Take the autographed Beatles album and go to Egypt. When you arrive, give the Spy the deed to the Swiss Chalet for the third piece of the document. Now take the Emerald scarab and the Gold Statuette of Tut then go to Athens. Here give the Spy the Emerald scarab and he will give you some more of the shredded document. About this time an intruder alert will sound and you will be asked several questions.

FIGHTING WARRIOR



Alan Charles of West Yorkshire sent in these tips for Melbourne House's second beat em up so if you're stuck look below but if you don't want your enjoyment spoiled then don't read the next bit.

I've warned you, still want to read on? OK

The main trick for success in this game is to use the vases that appear on the floor. If you smash a vase with a lower strike then you or your opponent can be affected in different ways. There's a sequence of eight:

1) Make the next enemy one of the nasty winged creatures;
2) Add six points to your stamina;
3) Kill the current enemy;
4) Subtract six points from your stamina;
5) Every time the enemy hits you it knocks a point off his stamina;
6) Add 500 bonus points to your score;
7) Kill the current enemy;
8) Subtract six points from your stamina.

So it is advisable to smash vases 2, 3, 5, 6 and but avoid the rest. Suppose a vase on screen is not one that you want — then walk backwards until it has disappeared and then walk forwards. The next vase to appear will be the next one in the sequence. This way you make steady but slow progress. When fighting with the enemy it is best to use the mid stroke as this takes less time to perform. Once you have come across Cleopatra's needle and the Sphinx a second time, a vase will appear that is higher than the others. If you smash this then the temple door will appear, inside here you will meet one of those winged creatures that guards the princess.

Every time you strike inside the temple then you lose one stamina point but the creature inside has the same stamina as the one outside. The trick is to almost kill the one outside, then strike the vase and rush in. Once you have killed the creature run across to the princess before the second monster has time to appear. You will then get the final graphic display and the game ends.

Generally it is not worth avoiding the arrows because the process of doing so gives your enemy time to get plenty of hits in. Should you be using the 'shield' (vase 6) then it is best to avoid the arrows.

POPEYE

I haven't heard much about this game since it was released, until now that is. James Marston of Billericay and Graham Kent of Croydon kindly donated the tips so if you're a bit stuck then read on. By the way, has anyone completed the game yet?

When the game starts go to the screen left of the start and collect the spinach and hearts. Don't give the hearts to Olive until the love meter gets low. Next go two screens to the right and climb up the rope. A key is at the top right of the building. Give Olive the hearts and go left. The key opens the door to the lighthouse. Now go to the top of the lighthouse but watch out for the monster. Follow the monster while collecting the spinach and another key. Go about halfway down the stairs and press down — the door will open. Now go either side of the balcony collecting the spinach and yet another key. This key opens the door in the room that has rope. Go to the top of the lighthouse again and go on to the right of the balcony. Here, go right, onto the girder. Now jump onto the moving thingy and let it carry you to the fruit machine. Jump off here (if anyone knows how to start the machine please could you write in). Now drop down from the right of this screen into the boat screen. Climb up the mast and collect the hearts. Get the key in the boat and go left and down the rope. The flashing heart is actually two on different layers. The go through the door to Olive.

ARCHON

Kevin Hall of Norwich sent in these tips for Archon, the chess/dungeons and dragons variant. These tips are useful only if you're on the Darkside.

First of all, teleport a Banshee in front of the knight which is in front of the Wizard. Challenge the Wizard, if you lose quit and start again. A Unicorn will challenge you. Now proceed to exterminate the back row until only Knights remain (your character may be killed during this, in which case teleport either another Banshee or Basilisks to continue the job). Use the trolls to kill the remaining Knights. Once you have done this then send everything else against the Unicorns. Use the Sorceress to revive important icons should they get injured.

SHADOW OF THE UNICORN

Despite this being the first of the 64K games from what I've seen of it I haven't been impressed, I just hope that Battle of the Planets is a bit better. Anyway if you have got the game and you enjoy it then these hints from R. J. Berry of Gosport might be of some help.

Rolquin, Sharmek and Lairmath can all be found in Tel Gelfay by their Wig-Wam style tents. Guinol can be found at Hansan. The following objects can be found in the following places:

Mithulin's crown can be found in Mure to the south in Oranfal.
Mithulin's seal can be found near Fathan, in south east Oranfal.
The Orb of Day is near Monar, in the south east of Oranfal.
Sharmek's Amulet is in Oslar.
Lairmath's Crest is at Elin, in north west of Falforn.
Holdin's Helm is at Noman Sith, in Falfor.
Torch of Revelation is at Fathrain, in south east Oranfal.
The lamp is at Marith, in south west Oranfal.
The Horn Summons is at Galzor, in northern Falforn.
Kielmath's Quil is in Tar Gelfay, by the bridge to Oslar in Falforn.
Rolquin's Sceptre is on the North road, by Clarooth in Falforn
The three glass jars can be found at Oranoman.
The Cloak of Innocence is at Fathan, in south east Oranfal.
Ulin-Gails pipes are just north of Sanberian.
Dwarf's Axe is in Rimersel, in southern Falforn.
The Stone Tablet is in Sanberian, south east of Oranoman.

but at the time of writing I only know of two people who have completed it. These tips were compiled with help from Phil Churchyard of Grantham, Paul Harkin of Manchester, Jonathan Ellis of County Durham, Alan and Steven Freeman of Leicester and myself. Please don't send in any more tips or hints for Marsport because I've got enough but I would appreciate help on Sweevo's World (it should be out by the time you read this).

On Daly level to get through the Bakery you need a cake. To make this combine the flour, water and baking tin. Inside the bakery is some dough — this allows you into the Bank. Go to the Elis level and go through the Danger room on C3. To survive this room just pick up the bomb and dump it in the refuse chute. Go through the other exit into H. Beware of the Sept Warriors!

Enter the Down lift on H3 and you will go down to Joly. Get the gauze and get in the Up tube. You will now be on laxa level. The Vidtex by the Danger room says 'Use Filter to breathe'. Get the charcoal from Daly level and return here. Put the gauze and the charcoal into the Factor unit to make a Gas Mask. Enter the Danger room. Wait around in here until the bomb has gone off then deposit the gas mask in the locker for future use. Go out of the other exit. You will now be in an area that is patrolled by a Warden. Enter the Ice cream room and take the Ice pack and the Cornet. The Ice Pack allows access to the Hot room while the Cornet is the key to the music room.

Inside the Hot room is a Geranium which is the key for the Plant room while inside the Music room is a Lute and a Lyre. If you take the up tube from Gill A3 and you will go to Alba. Here there are four Vidtex units. These give clues to how to get through the Danger room on that level. To survive in there you will need the eyeshields which are made from the Sunchart, the frame and glass. It is from the Astronomy on Alba level that you can get to Byer and other objects and rooms such as the Bank.


This is the only
warning you'll get.
They're coming soon.
FIREBIRD
NEW FROM FIREBIRD. THE HOT RANGE.
Firebird is a Trade Mark of British Telecommunications plc

FAIRLIGHT

Thanks to Andrew Riley of Durham and Mr R Wood of Peterborough I can now complete Fairlight and at the end of the game it tells you of the next game which is . . . (I will leave that for you to find out). Not to spoil your fun, the solution is split into two parts the second of which will appear in the Christmas Special.

The first thing to do is to get the crown that is above the doorway. To do this you must stack an assortment of objects in order to climb up: a barrel and two flower pots should do the trick. With the scroll, from the first screen, cross the drawbridge and avoid the monk. Walk around the cave walls with the crown. One of the walls has a hidden door which allows access to a tomb. Inside here move one of the panels on top of the tomb and go down the hole. You will now be in another tomb with the Book of Light. Take this and use the scroll to return. Store the Book somewhere safe.

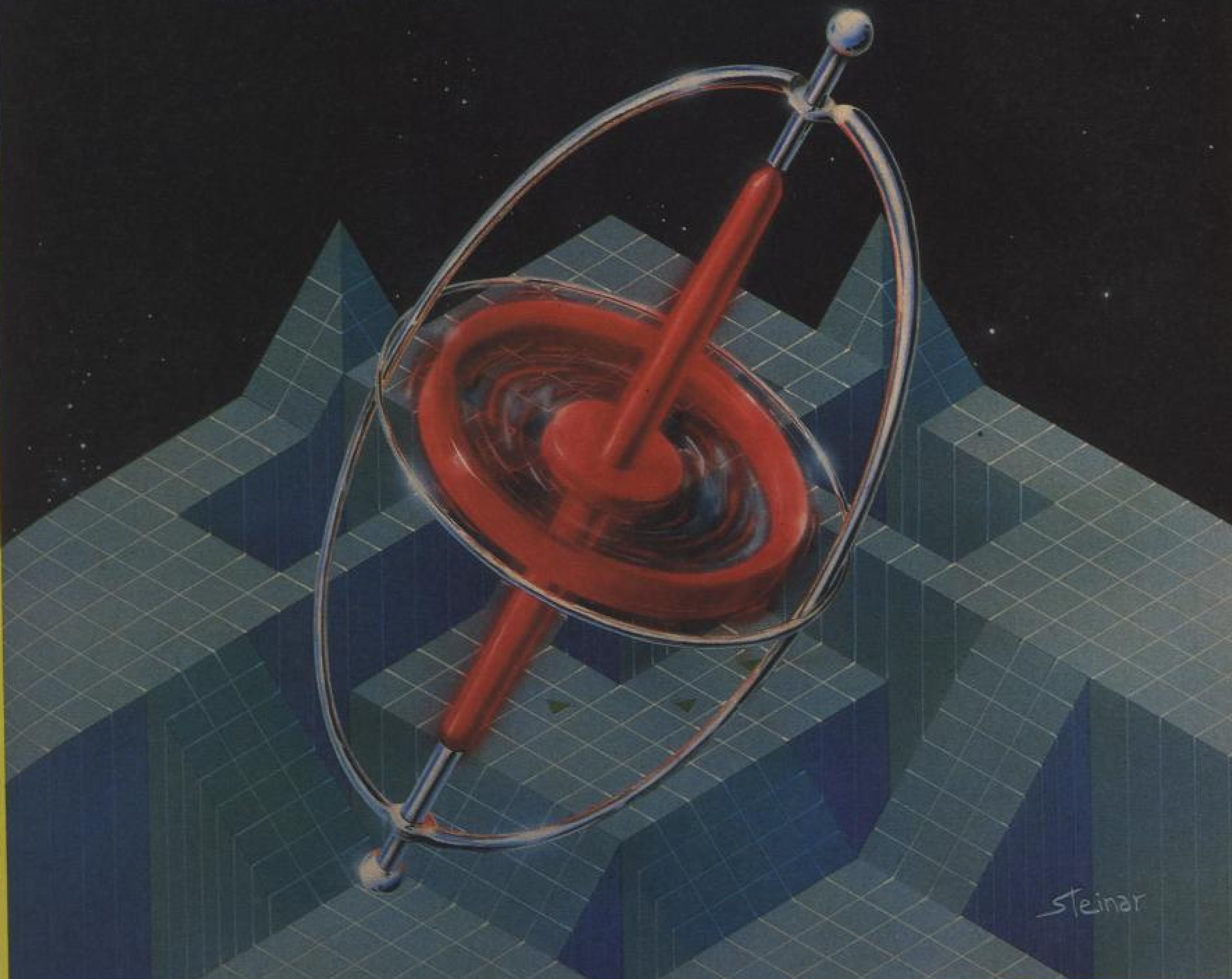


In one of the rooms with the man eating plants there is a tower (you need a key which is guarded by a troll to enter the tower). This tower is guarded by three Monks. To get past the first you will need the cross and to get past the others you will need two potions. The cross is in the throne room which contains a monk; the cross is behind a panel which has to be pushed to get it. There are three potions: one is in the chequered room with two whirlwinds, another is behind two barrels in a side room which is hidden. The third potion is guarded by a monk. Use an hourglass to freeze him and then climb up and get it.

That's enough tips for Marsport this month so you will have to wait another two weeks for the Christmas Special.

That's all the playing tips that your getting this month. So you will have to wait until next issue for some more. You know that Derek has his Superheroes bit where he shows who completed what game first — but it is only for adventure games. What do you think about having one to do with arcade games? Don't miss out on the Christmas Special because it is going to contain lots of goodies such as the pokes special. The address to send your information to is:

Robin Candy
Crash
PO BOX 10
Ludlow
Shropshire
SY8 1DB


Steinar

A CRASH Smash

T•A•U

TAU CETI

Producer: CRL
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Steve Cooke**

Location: Tau Ceti System
Stellar Data: G Type
Distance from Earth: 19.4 light years
Galactic co-ordinates: 13 degrees Galactic South West
Colonisation Data: First wave left Earth in 2050 arriving 2090. Tau Ceti III colony lost within ninety years due to plague. This was to become the first major disaster in man's involvement with space. Soon after, a second expedition met with an even worse fate . . .
Excerpt from *Encyclopaedia Galactica*







Looking out onto the planet's surface in TAU CETI. The stars shine brightly in the yellow sky adding an air of mystery to the weird buildings to be found. Waxing poetic, you go out to destroy the nasties

Man's first colony on Tau Ceti III was wiped out by a previously undiscovered plague. When a cure was found, a second expedition left for the world. Unfortunately, the planet's automatic self defence system had malfunctioned meantime, and the ships of the second expedition and all the colonists were wiped out. After much deliberation back on earth it was decided that a small one-man vessel might manage to penetrate the defence screens and shut down the central nuclear reactor which powers the robot guards. A tricky mission — but it just might be possible. 'Like a fool, you volunteered,' as it says on the box cover.

Tau Ceti is a complex game to play. You control a Skimmer, and begin from a docking bay in a city on Tau Ceti III. Basically, you have to wander around this and other cities finding and collecting cooling rods which need to be installed in the planet's main fusion reactor in order to shut it down. Once the reactor has been switched off, the guardian robots will cease to prowl the planet's surface and colonists will be able to move back in safety.

Your view into the game is from the cockpit of the skimmer. The display is dominated by your viewing window which shows the surroundings in a shaded, 3D perspective. Below this window is a communications screen used for entering commands into the skimmer's controls and for receiving system messages such as 'missile launched'. To the right of this smaller window are two orientation markers and ship's status indicators. Here the shield strength, skimmer height, fuel level, laser temperature, speed and weapon inventory are all immediately visible to the player.

Above this is another window which displays a radar map of the skimmer's current location. Finally, at the top of the right hand part of the screen a compass, view indicator and clock are found.

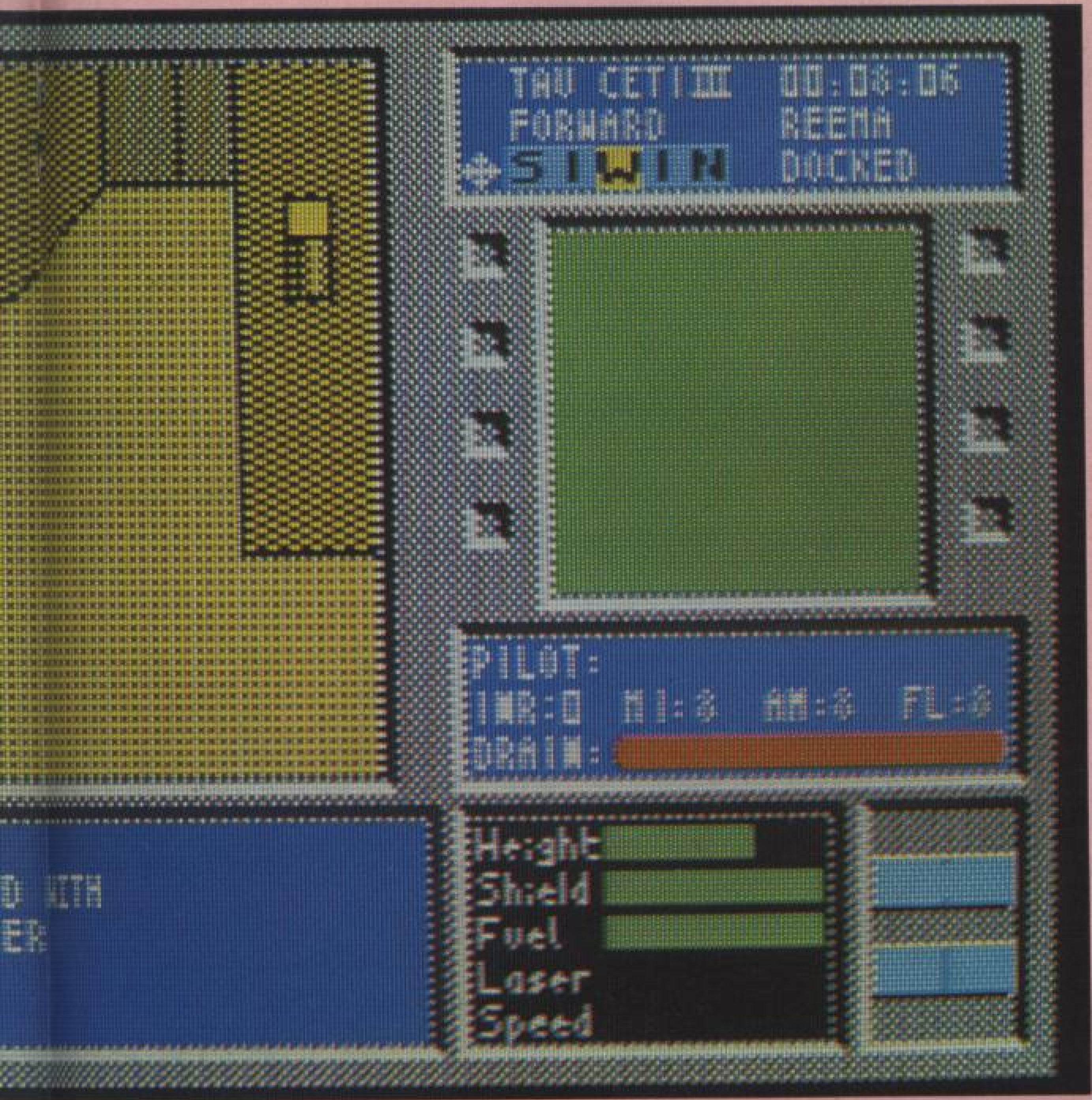
The main screen can present a view out onto the planet which may be to the front, back or to either side of the skimmer. A map of the planet and the links between the cities can also be called up and zoomed in and out of, and when it comes to manipulating the cooling rods, it's all done from the viewscreen. You can also make notes in this area of the screen.

Various kinds of robot inhabit the different cities, including prowling flying saucers. Some are harmless, but most will send laser bolts plummeting into your sides immediately. The only answer to such action is return fire. Your lasers have to be aimed but, unless they are damaged, they last forever. Missiles, once fired, home in for the kill — but you only have a limited supply. Take your pick. A successful hit turns your target into a shower of shimmering pixels which slowly fall to the ground.

As the day progresses the angle of the sun changes and the shadows cast by buildings and the way in which objects are illuminated alters. At night, because of the graphic technique involved, most robots and buildings become practically invisible. To counter this, you can use infra red to view the world. This lasts for as long as you need it,



C•E•T•I



TAU CETI. You start the game docked with the Gal-Corp lander, safe and snug — but this state of affairs doesn't last long. . . .



but tends to leave after images on the screen. Flares, on the other hand, are as good as daylight for a while, but there are only a few of these.

To get from one city to another, you have to reach certain nexus points. Docking the ship in one of these gives you a rest, more fuel and the opportunity to reach other cities in the network.

CRITICISM

● **'The graphics featured in this game are very good, in fact they're some of the best filled-in graphics I've seen on the Spectrum. The shading, which alters depending on the position of the sun, adds to the realism. The only thing that lets the game down is the sound, which is slightly disappointing. Every once in a while, a new game comes along which is destined to become a classic; *Tau Ceti* is on the same par with games such as *Elite* and *Lords of Midnight*. The depth and the complexity of the game make a sure fire winner with people who like involving software, but for me the nice touches make the program worth while — like infra red mode and the note pad. Though the game is complex, it is very easy to get into once you have mastered the controls of the craft.'**

● *'*Tau Ceti *is one of the best games I have seen for a long stretch of time. The game just oozes originality. Even the scenario is original. When it first loaded up I was amazed at the display as it bore little resemblance to any style of graphic I had previously seen on the Spectrum. Seeing a saucer glide gracefully across the screen with the shading adjusting, according to its relative position to the sun, is just amazing. The sense of reality is something to behold indeed. Normally, after such an amazing technical show, I'd expect the actual game to be of a below average standard. Not so. The game shows a depth of design normally found only in arcade machines. Blasting alien artefacts is fun and the section with the damping rods is very good, showing some similarities with* Impossible Mission*'s puzzle section. Definitely worthy of space on anyone's software rack.'*

● 'Superb game. What else can you say about something that captures the imagination so brilliantly and has no flaws at all. This is the kind of game that just doesn't date. There are too many good features and no sickly gimmicks. When we saw the preview version, I suspected that it would be excellent but it has far surpassed anyone's expectations. Steve Cooke should go far. He has brought us a game that will be remembered as an all time classic. There's not much more to say.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: keys only
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: superb
Sound: average
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling
General rating: an excellent game, combining several elements with stunning graphics

Use of computer	94%
Graphics	94%
Playability	90%
Getting started	87%
Addictive qualities	94%
Value for money	92%
Overall	**94%**

BIG BEN STRIKES AGAIN

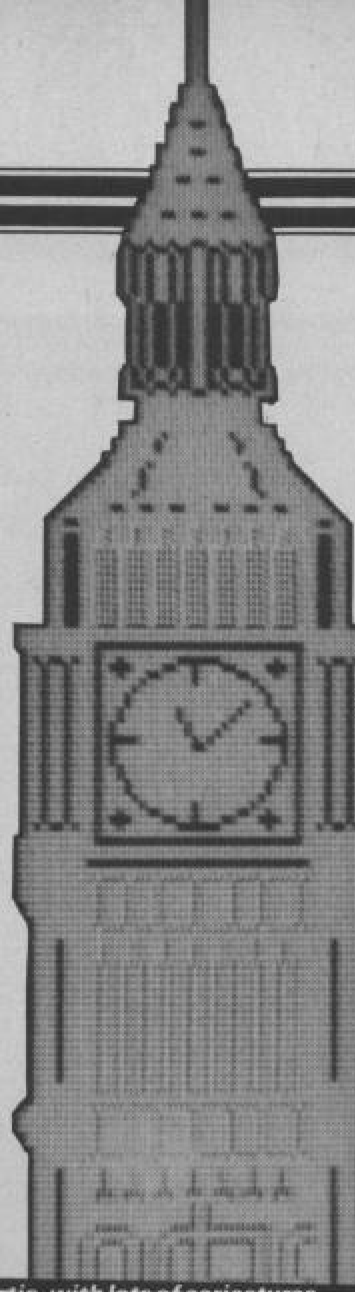
Producer: Artic
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **John Prince**

Here's your chance to meet some of the big names in politics! With the release of *Big Ben Strikes Again* Artic have brought the caricatured faces of some of the most well known Members of Parliament to your Spectrum. The game is basically a platform arcade affair with nasties being the members of Mrs Thatcher's government, assorted notes of varying currency, bouncing barrels and helicopters! All the mobile nasties patrol an area of the screen rather can seeking out Ben, but are deadly if he blunders into them. Ben (he of the title) is in fact a reporter looking for an exclusive about the government, for his paper, rather than the famous clocktower.

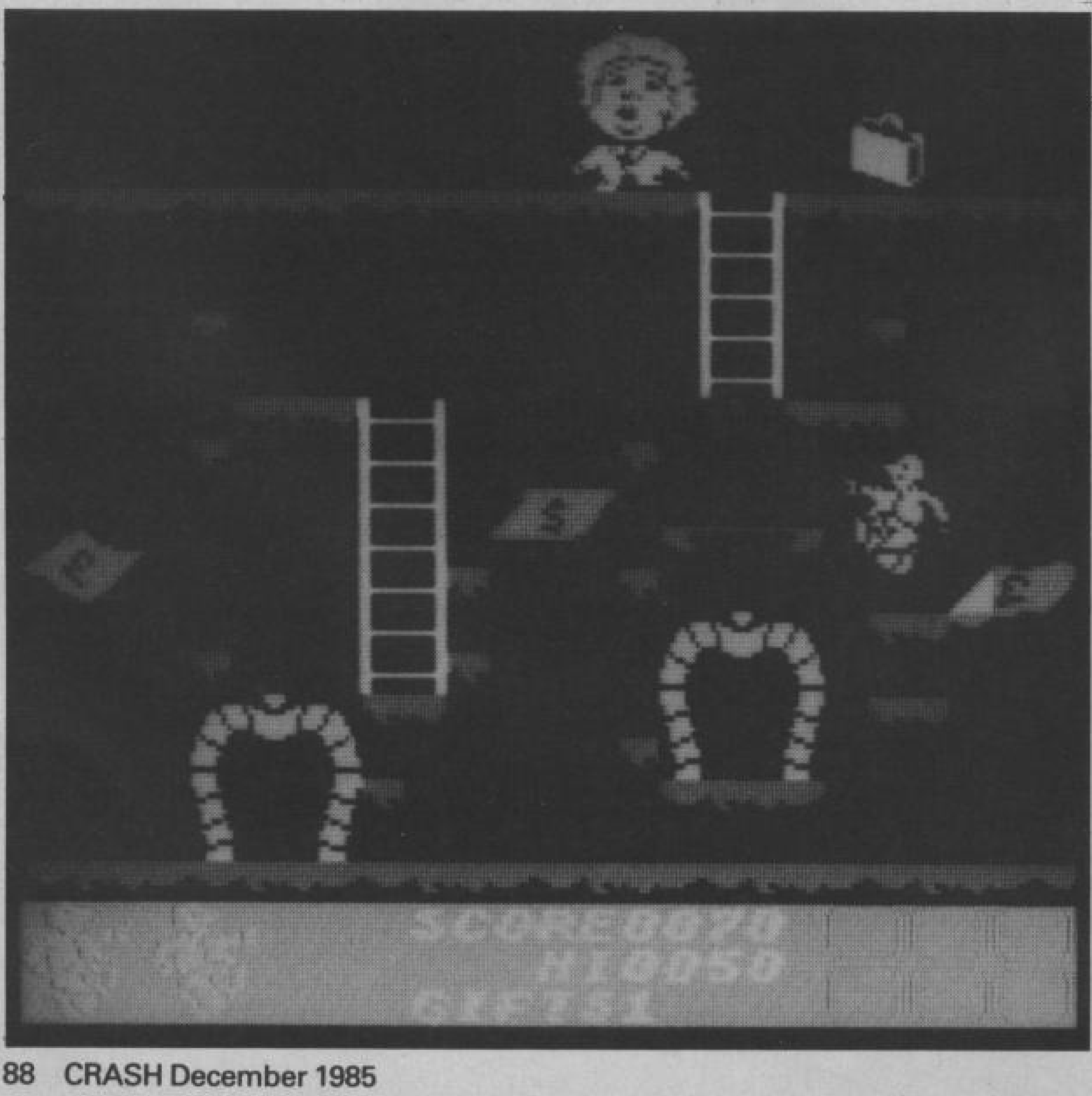
Ben is on a mission — his nose for news has caught a whiff of a potential scoop, and he's travelling round the Houses of Parliament trying to piece together the big story he's sure is about to break. Ben has to collect gifts for the various political figures in the game, and present them in exchange for leaked items of news. All kinds of bits and pieces can be picked up on the way around the screens and added to Ben's inventory by simply walking over them.

To get the rather portly character you control from one screen to another, you use doorways which may be anywhere on the screens. You don't have to complete one screen before moving on to the next, so it's fairly easy to go exploring straight away. Jumping and falling gets you to different levels (though falling too far is fatal), and there's the odd ladder to scamper up and down too!

The game comes with a fairly comprehensive screen editor which is menu driven and allows you to tinker with the contents of individual rooms or completely redesign them if you so wish. Once a screen has been modified or designed from scratch you can save it to tape and play it again whenever you like. Indeed you can fine tune selected screens in the game as supplied, making them harder or more difficult according to your taste. Alternatively, there's no reason why you couldn't assemble a completely new game to amuse yourself with — but you are stuck with the library of mobile characters and can't design new nasties of your own.



BIG BEN STRIKES AGAIN from Artic, with lots of caricatures of famous figures combined with arcade action. Could that be Nigel up top there?



CRITICISM

● **'Oh dear. Flickery sprites abound. Poor graphics and error checking riddle the game with faults. Good caricatures of some of the politicians are lost in this otherwise abysmal game. Very, very primitive. Don't buy this . . .'**

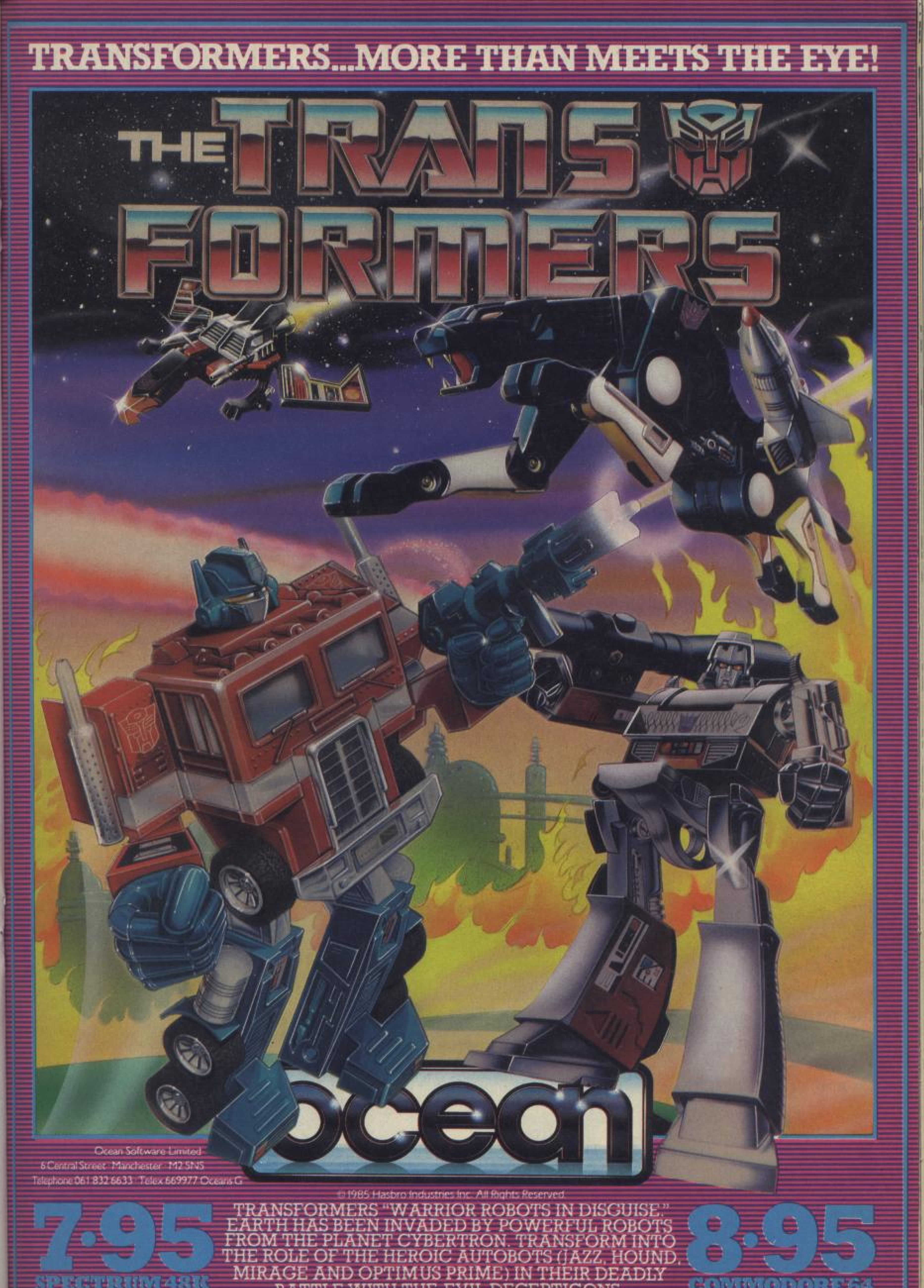
● *'Apart from the slight amusement caused by the mega headed caricatures of the Tory cabinet, the overall fun got from this game was, as near as makes no odds — nothing. The sprites flicker at a horrendous rate, and the checks to see if you've hit a baddie are appallingly poor on occasions. After* Mutant Monty, *which I really liked, Artic have really come down in the world. Definitely not a winner.'*

● 'At first glance this just looks like a boring platform game with a few interesting little caricatures of politicians, but little else going for it. Then you find out about the screen redesigner and things look up. In tests I couldn't change the position of the moving characters once I'd put them in a screen I was designing without scrubbing the whole lot and starting again. A bit frustrating. *Lode Runner* did this sort of thing much better. For the price, this game falls short and lets Artic down. They can do better.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, BOTTOM ROW jump
Joystick: Sinclair, Kempston, Cursor
Keyboard play: adequate
Use of colour: overdone
Graphics: very poor, with odd exceptions
Sound: below average
Skill levels: one, but you can adjust the difficulty
Screens: 20
General rating: not a wonderful offering; unattractive at £6.95

Use of computer	40%
Graphics	39%
Playability	39%
Getting started	69%
Addictive qualities	50%
Value for money	33%
Overall	**42%**



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Pyjamarama 92% with 3 lives
Hypersports Swimming 25.75m, Long Horse 9.99, Archery 4200, Shooting 9400, Triple Jump 17.44, Weight lifting 210kg.
Bruce Lee 1,800,330 killed 33 wizards after 4 hours
Match Day 10-1
Football Manager Division one, won FA cup every year
Kung Fu Black belt 7
Finders Keepers Completed
Wayne Britton, Brotton, Saltburn, Cleveland

DT's Decathalon 988,971 (664,606 in day II)
Spy Hunter 247,255
Highway Encounter Completed, 25,850
Kung Fu Black Belt
Pyjamarama completed
Finders Keepers Completed
Penetrator Completed
Mooncresta Retired at 64,000
Chequered Flag 1.06.26 on Monza
Sergio Trigo Tavares, Visconde de Fonta Arcada, Portugal

Way of the Exploding Fist 111,800, tenth dan
Frank Bruno's Boxing Andrea Punchyaheadof
Match Point Beat computer on all levels
Dynamite Dan 1370, 4 sticks of dynamite
Herbert's Dummy Run 86 jelly babies
Technician Ted 4 tasks completed
Jet Set Willy 76 objects
Manic Miner Completed
Wizard's Lair 23690
Richard Edgerton, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands

Supertest Day one, 181,000, Day two, 363,00
Hypersports Swimming 25.95s, Skeet 9600, Pole Vault 9.99m, Triple Jump 16.76m, Weight Lifting 225kg, Archery 4120, Overall 336,776
Finders Keepers Completed with £878.76
Everyone's a Wally Completed with £2,470
Deathchase 37,489
Rocco World Champion Without Being Knocked Down At All
Herbert's Dummy Run Completed at 1.36pm with 93 jelly babies
Way of the Exploding Fist 151,300
Ian Hamilton and Martin Tizzard, Orpington, Kent

Hunchback II Level 6, 934 points
Ms Pacman 8th screen, 57,960
Pyjamarama Completed 100%
Sabre Wulf Completed 99%
Mr Wong's Loopy Laundry 3,600
Booty 42 objects
Roland's Rat Race Completed first day
Travel with Trashman cleaned the world 20,000
Tribble Trubble Accredited Megascore, 12,090
Richard Stokeld, Arnold, Nottingham

Football Manager 100% Maximun
Grand National Won
Rocco Won world championship
Timegate Completed, 8,204
Cricket Capt Won level 1,2 and 3
Jungle Trouble Completed
Armageddon L28, 21,790
David 'Wally' Williams, Wrexham, Clwyd

Bruce Lee Completed 30 times
Pyjamarama completed
Ghostbusters Completed
Danger Mouse in Double Trouble Saved the world four times
Kung Fu Completed
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Minder 6,975 points
Way of the Exploding Fist 6th Dan
James Bradbury, Hindley, Wigan

Underwurlde Completed
Hobbit Nearly completed
Football Completed everything
Pyjamarama Completed
Timegate Completed on easy
Danger Mouse in Double Trouble Completed 3 times
Jet Set Willy Completed
Manic Miner Completed
Atic Atac Completed
John Merchant, Moorland, Lincoln

Way of the Exploding Fist 10th Dan, 128,900
Raid Over Moscow Completed with 7 survivors
Match Day 5 mins won final 11-2
Broad Street Completed
Skool Daze 34,620
Andrew Dickinson, Sheffield

Daley Thomson's Decathalon 100m 9.10s, Long Jump 9.73m, Shot Putt 29.31, High Jump 2.51m, 400m 32.51s, 110m Hurdles 10,12s, Pole Vault 5.07m, Discus 83.90, Javalin 103m, 1500m 121,01s
Mooncresta 57,150
Ad Astra Level 17, 39,520
Tapper 105,450
Way of the Exploding Fist 823,175
Bryan O'Rourke, Ullapool, Ross Shire

Spy Hunter 167,530
Bruce Lee 288,392
Buck Rogers 263,000
Hypersports 193,200
Daley Thomson's Decathalon 410,640
Way of the Exploding Fist 10th Dan, 63,210
Match Day 3-1 in the final
Spy vs Spy Average guy spy
Frankie goes to Hollywood 60% a real being
David Reid, Shirley, Croydon

Nodes of Yesod 42%
Alien 8 13 chambers
Glass 57,200
Spy vs Spy Sky High Spy
TLL 25,010
Way of the Exploding Fist 6th Dan
Chris Irwin, Newbury

Spy Hunter 272,385
Match Day 11-1 in final 15 mins
Match Point 6-4 in final
Super Brat World Champ
Frank Bruno's Boxing Beaten Peter Perfect
Vincent Godfrey, Enfield, Middlesex

Hypersports 142,428
Frank Bruno's Boxing Frenchie KO twice
Manic Miner Solar power generator room
Match Day Beat Computer 4-2
Mugsy 84%
Vince Vity, Morecambe, Lancs




ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENT
JETMAN
JETMAN — WALLY OF THE STARWARS, AND KNOWN TO ALL AS "LIGHT ON BUT NOBODY IN", HAS INADVERTANTLY ASSISTED THE ALIENS TO INVADE EARTH BY FLYING IN THEIR DONGLE BOMB! NOW HE'S GOB-STRACK 'COS HE'S JUST SEEN UNDER THEIR KILTS!
SHOCKAROOTIE
AND YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO WANDER THE EARTH, DESPISED AS A TRAITOR!
OUH
HEE
HOH
MY GAWD! HAVE YOU SEEN UNDER THEIR KILTS?!!
G'WAY! I DESPISE YOU!
AS A RESULT OF THE ALIENS DONGLE-BOMB, THE PEOPLE OF EARTH ARE PUTTY IN THE ALIENS PAWS, AN' DEEF.
BUT...
WO-HOH! ONLY I CAN CONTROL YOU PUNY EARTHLING SLAVES WITH THIS DONGLE-WARPING TRANSMITTER!
HOW IT WORK?
EH?
WHY IT SHOUTING?
SCROOP ME!
WATCH...
EARTHLING SLAVES, LIE....
.... DOWN!
HOO
THAT SOME OL' DOOHICKY YOU GOT THERE!
EEE! THE ALIENS HAVE TOTAL CONTROL AND MY MAGIC-ALL-SEEING-EYE-TO THE-FUTURE'S KNACKERED. I GOTTA THINK FAST!
I SURRENDER!
EH? YOU CAN'T DO THAT! WE ALREADY WON! HOW CAN YOU SURRENDER WHEN WE ALREADY WON? THAT'S NOT FAIR! THAT'S GONE AN' SPOILT THE WHOLE INVASION!
YOU'RE A CHEAT, IS WHAT YOU ARE!
SLEAZE BAG
CHEATO
AND QUIT ALL THAT SHOUT-SHOUT-SHOUTIN'! IT'S YOUR LOT THAT'S DEEF, NOT US!
SHEESH! THIS LOONY GOT IT ALL WRONG RIGHT FROM THE START! OH, HECK
DASH!
WE'D BETTER CONSULT THE OL' RULE BOOK!
CHEAT!
HMM...
INVASION RULES OK
ACCORDING TO THIS WE GOTTA UNDONGLE THE EARTHIES AND FIGHT 'EM HAND-TO-PAW! WHICH WOULD BE ACE EXCEPT THEY GOT US OUTNUMBERED!
ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO....
... A BIT OF THE OL' ARTHUR SCARGILL WITH THE RULES!
EASY DOES IT...
SCRIBBLE
HAH!
I GOT THE DONGLE WARPER!
IT MUST'VE NICKED IT WHILE I WASN'T LOOKING!
IT'S NOT KIDDING, CHIEF!
HOKAY, YOU EARTHIES! IT'S YOUR TURN NOW! I ORDER YOU TO FIGHT, MAIM, AN' KILL ALL THE UGLY WIERDO'S THAT HAVE COME FROM OUTER SPACE!
FIGHT
MAIM
KILL
OH, HECK!
THEN OUR HERO REALISES HE JUST CAME FROM OUTER SPACE, AN' HE AIN'T TOO GOOD LOOKING EITHER!
HOORS!
HIT!
BURN!
HURT!
DRINK!
GAWSH! I GONNA HIDE! I GONNA DO IT HERE IN THE ALIENS MOTHER-SHIP!
HAH-HICKY-HAA! THEY WON'T FIND ME IN HERE...
FOO!
WHO GOT BAD BREATH...?
WOW! LOOKIT THE SHADOW ON THE WALL! WHO IT? WHAT IT? HOW IT? ISN'T IT SCARREE? NO IT ISN'T! ISN'T! SEE NEX' MUNF FOR BIG WHOTSITS! EH?

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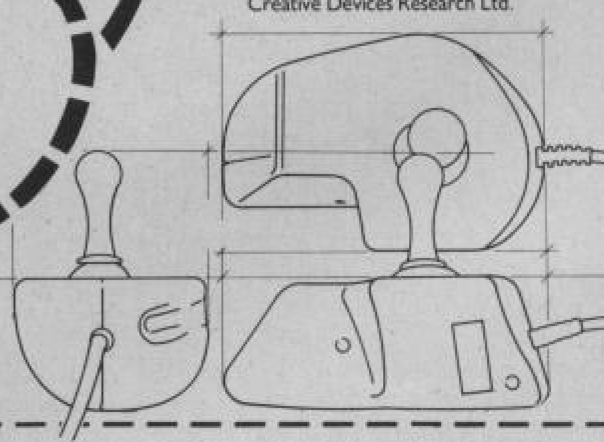
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Crash Competition

XCELLEN
A CHANCE TO S
FROM ROBOT

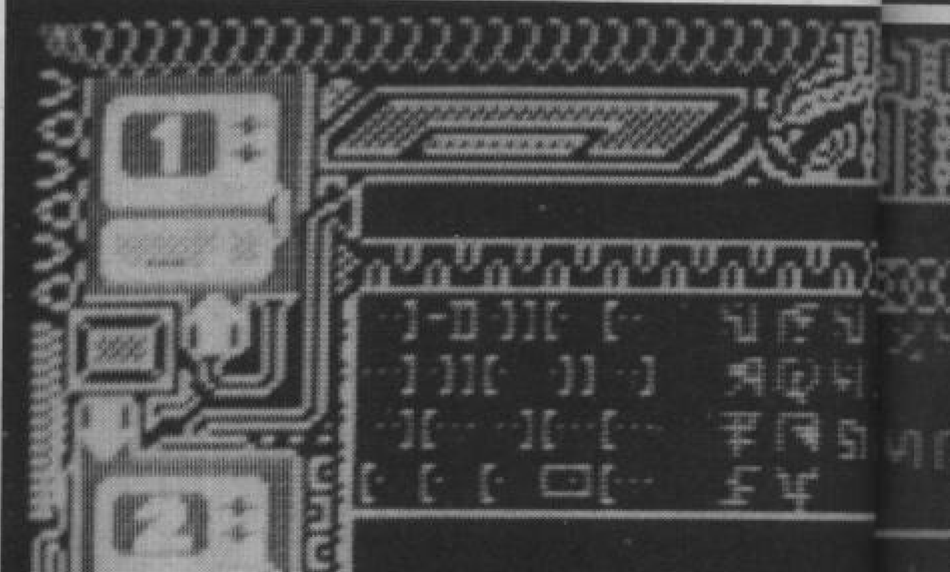
WIN A COPY OF PROGRAM TECHNIQUE'S LATEST GAME



SCENE FADES GENTLY TO SUPERIOR COURTROOM ON MENGCHE III, JUDICIARY PLANET IN THE PRISON SYSTEM.

Peering over the edge of the dock, you see the berobed Arch Counsellor, your hired legal representative, coast elegantly forwards on his hover-pads. The ROBODEFENDA MARK 2 assigned to your case begins addressing the COMPUJUDGE. The offence is not capital, but if you are found guilty a long period of exile in the Plasma Mines could be your lot. You glance at the COMPUJUDGE which is about to come to a verdict. Trepidation fills your soul. Rivulets of cold sweat begin travelling downwards, on their pilgrimage towards your quaking boots.

"This was no ordinary case of taking and driving away, M'Lud", your counsellor intones, "my client was forced to resort to theft, against all his principles Your Computerness.
"RAM Chips of the jury, I implore you — was not my client's mission and aim in perpetrating this theft an honourable one? Did he not steal the Alien Ship in order that he might free the human race from the domination of the Sentinel Computers? Should he not be allowed to walk free from this courtroom?"

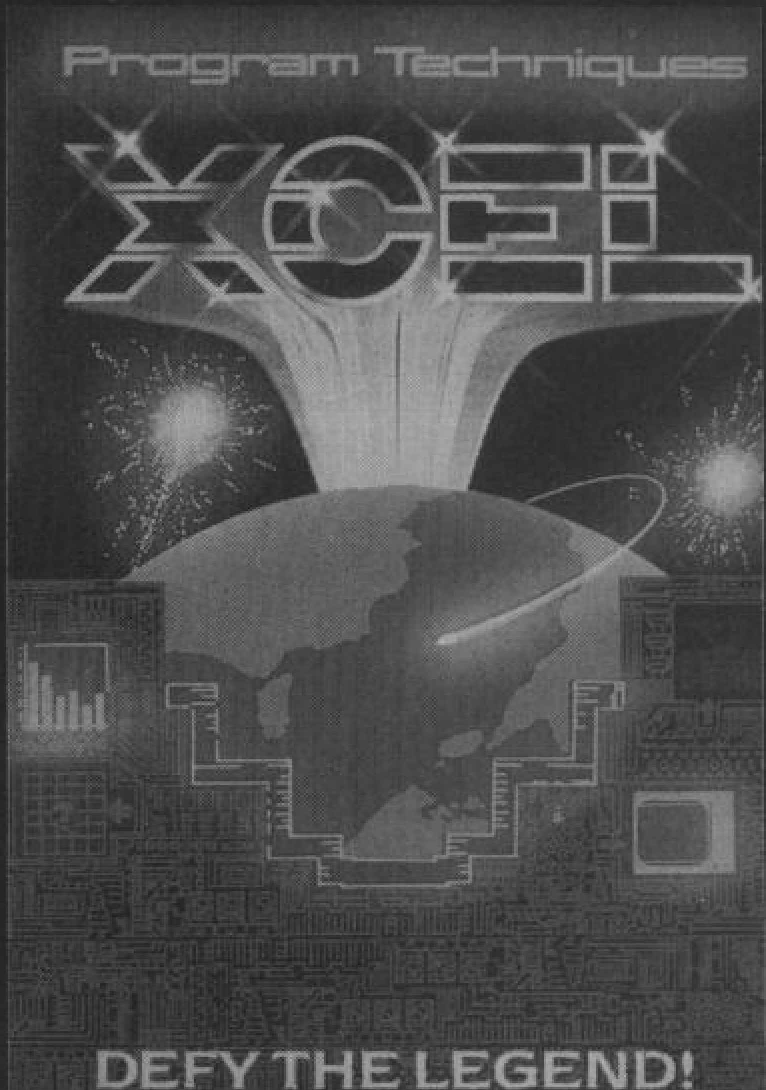


That's it. End of speech. No more advocacy. Any moment now the COMPUJUDGE will pronounce its verdict which will be binding finally and forever. No appeal is allowed — the system is infallibly fair. . . . The COMPUJUDGE's metallic voice breaks the silence:

"You are hereby found guilty of breaking and entering the Museum of Archaic Machinery and Transport History. Guilty of stealing a rare spacecraft belonging to a now extinct race of beings and, most heinous crime against machinekind of all, guilty of kidnapping and partially reprogramming the computer system which the ship contained. The sentence is.........

NT STUFF!
SAVE HUMANITY
T DOMINATION





. . . the image produced in your mind by the antiquated SNARG multichannel sensory inducer flickers and fades. Once again the old machine has let you down during the main feature. It really is time you upgraded. Ho hum. What to do now . . . a long evening stretches before you. Boring, boring, boring. No Mindfilms to watch now the SNARG's out of action.

Hang on though, there's always that antique entertainment system that Cousin Marco brought as a souvenir from his last holiday cruise to Earth. Yes, what a good idea — now, what can it do? Marco said it had been found with some games and that "XCEL" was quite an amusing diversion. Why not.

Funny — in XCEL you began by stealing an alien ship. Wonder what it looked like. . . .

Well — the chaps at Program Techniques who wrote XCEL never quite got round to deciding what the alien ship you pilot in the game actually looks like, you see. So they've asked us to ask you to have a go at drawing it for them. Then future generations will not have to strain their minds trying to think up for themselves what the ship might have looked like. An eye to the future, is what these Prog Tech fellows have. They're offering no less than one hundred copies of their game (reviewed in this issue) as prizipoos for the best visual representation of the ship you pilot in their game. So dust down the old imaginations, sharpen your felt-tips or whatever, and get thinking about that spacecraft.

Address your alien art to **XCEL ALIENS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** and make sure your ship flies to us by 30th December.

CRASH COURSE

Rosetta McLeod

I always seem to be complaining about the poor variety and quality of educational software in this column, but now I've found a series of early learning programs which I can be totally enthusiastic about. The Learning Box programs written by Five Ways and published by Arrow, is an outstanding series which encourages young children to develop basic letter and number skills.

Five Ways have put a great deal of thought and effort into the programs, and have realised that educational packages should include not just the computer tape, but also other materials such as books, together with clear guidance on their use. Each of the programs in the Learning Box series follows the same format: the attractive plastic case contains

MARVELLOUS!

the tape (which has the program on one side, and a story or rhymes to listen to on the other); a beautifully illustrated story-book to accompany the audio tape; a parents' book containing step by step instructions for all the learning activities; and an overlay which simplifies the keyboard for even the youngest child.

The programs themselves all feature a carefully structured range of activities designed in a clear sequence so that children can work from the easy to the more difficult. This logical structure of subject matter is extremely important for effective meaningful learning. The inclusion of detailed guidance for parents ensures that the foundations on which a new learning activity rests can be introduced before the concept is presented using the computer.

For very young children, learning material must be bright and attractive, and the colourful screen graphics of The Learning Box series are quite excellent. Sound is also used to very good effect, and it can be turned off if required. Other extremely useful touches include the facility for exiting from an activity at any point and return to the menu, and well as a pause facility. The control keys for all of these options (caps

WONDERFUL!

shift/break and the appropriate number key) have been carefully selected to make it virtually impossible for the child to carry out any of these actions accidentally.

It really is hard to find any criticisms of these programs — the only real snag that arose concerns the overlay which doesn't fit the Spectrum Plus and could possibly have been a bit more robust. The main thing, though, is that in terms of their educational value and the enjoyment they offer, the

FANTASTIC!

programs are streets ahead of most other early learning software. Daniel (as you know, he's my five year old tester) loved the series, even demanding to see them again as soon as he woke up in the morning — though at that early hour, his father could perhaps be forgiven for being less than enthusiastic!

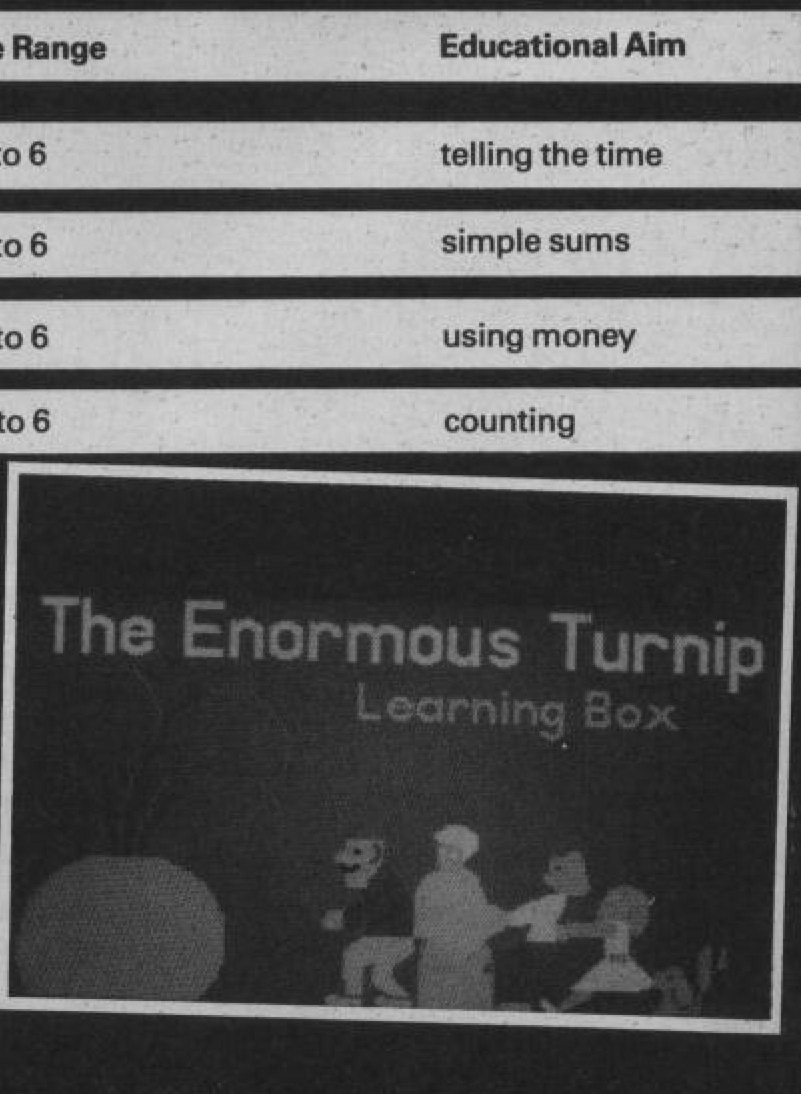
The Number Programs £9.95 each

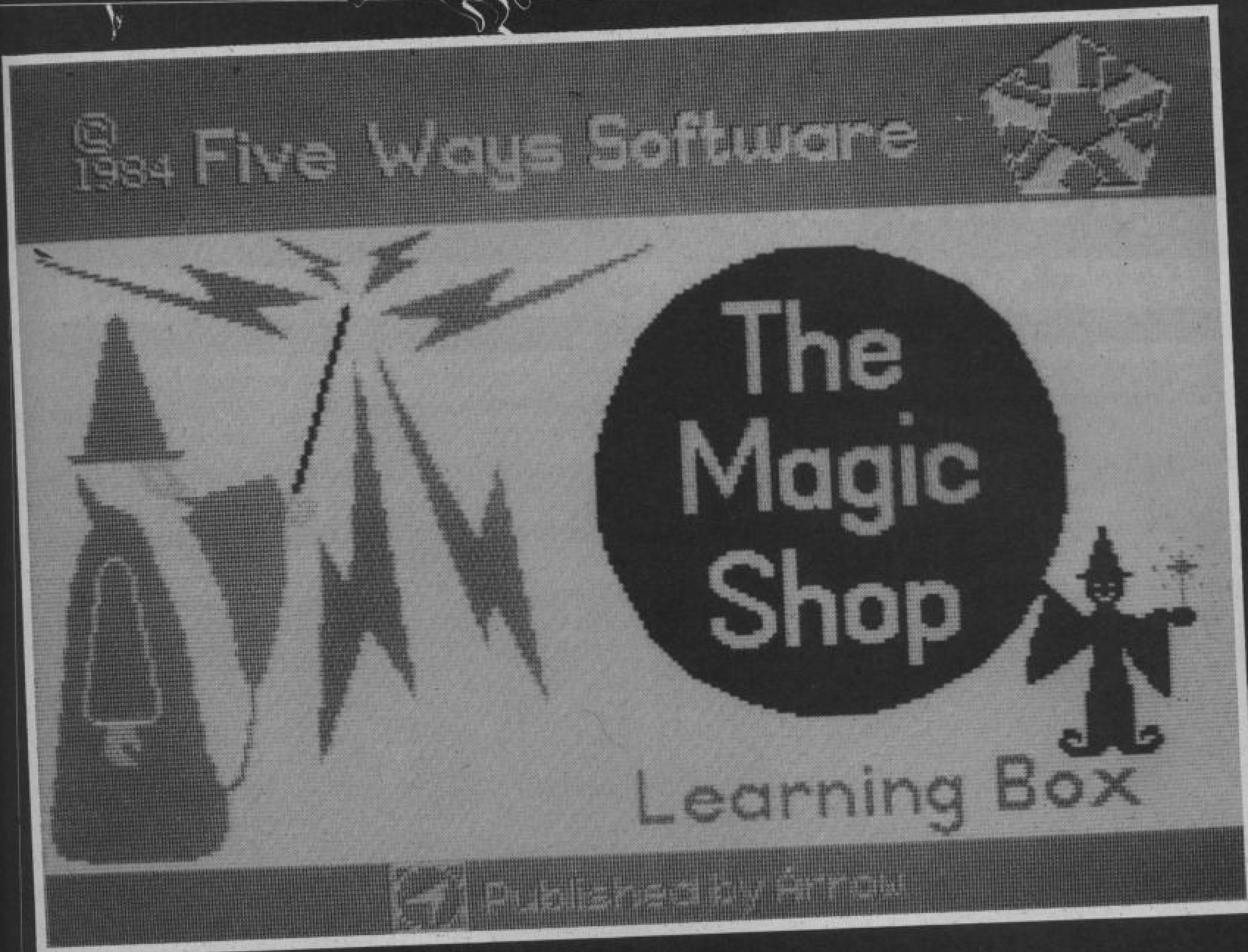
Title	Age Range	Educational Aim
Mister Mac's Money	up to 6	telling the time
Nine Currant Buns	up to 6	simple sums
The Magic Shop	up to 6	using money
Five Little Ducks	up to 6	counting

The most simple of the number programs for the younger age group, *Five Little Ducks*, begins by teaching sorting and matching skills, then develops the concept of counting using the numbers 1 — 5. There are ten activities in this program and, again, all of them are nicely related to the rhyme of the Five Little Ducks in the booklet and on the listening tape. The most outstanding feature of this program is the way in which it relates the number of objects represented pictorially on the screen to the figure symbol for the number.

This relationship is also used to good effect in *Nine Currant Buns*, which goes on to the next stage and introduces the numbers 6 — 9, before giving practice in counting, adding and subtracting using 1 — 9. This time there are, would you believe, no less than seventeen activities arranged in graded steps! The simple sums using plus and minus signs are very clearly presented. This is exactly the kind of approach which brings arithmetic to life for young children.

Mister Mac's Day, the telling the time program, is a very clever way of teaching children a very complex skill. When you consider the variety of types of



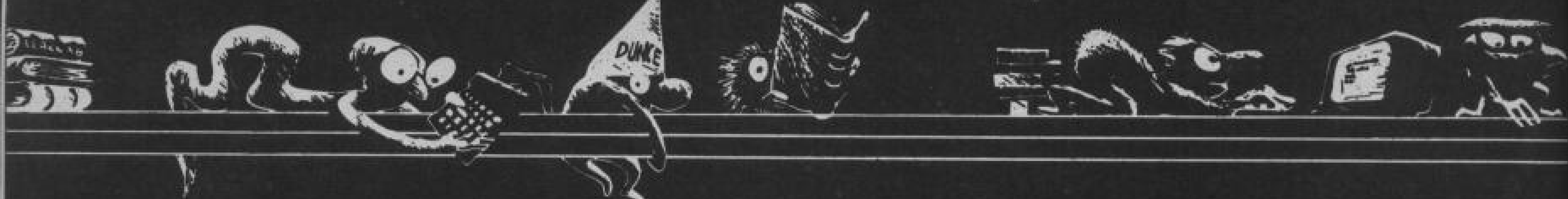


clock available these days — analogue, and both 12 and 24 hour digital — and the different ways of expressing time — five thirty, half past five, seventeen thirty — you'll begin to realise how difficult it can be. The designers, though, have thought of every eventuality, and have created a charming story to form the background for the activities. Children will love reading about, and listening to, *Mr Mac's Day* and then helping Mr Mac drive his train so that it arrives at the stations on time.

Using money is another skill that children must master,and in *The Magic Shop* the child has to buy the ingredients to make magic potions. The coins are pictured on the overlay, so the child can press the appropriate keys to count out the money needed. Once the youngster can manage to count out the exact sum required, guidance is given on counting out the nearest amount of money, and then checking that the correct change is given by the shopkeeper. The parents' guide stresses the importance of practising with real money, and offers some helpful advice. One child of seven who tested the game for me spent over an hour, totally engrossed in it. He particularly enjoyed the Making Spells activity, where the child chooses from the spell book and makes a potion by using the coins to buy the ingredients needed. (My tester usually began with "squirt of anti-spook spray"!)







The Learning To Read Programs £9.95 each

Title	Age Range	Educational Aim
Red Riding Hood	up to 6	reading words
Goldilocks	up to 6	reading sentences
The Enormous Turnip	up to 8	building words
Hansel and Gretel	up to 8	spelling

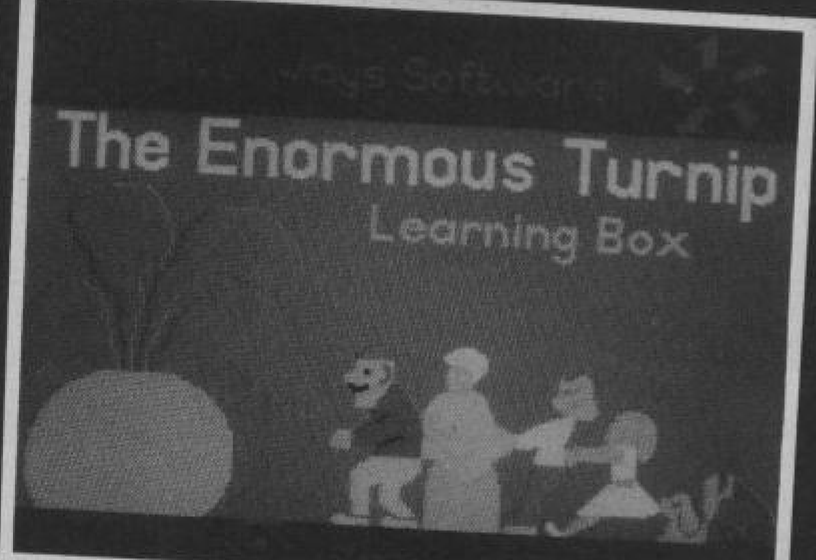


Based on well-loved children's stories, these programs are a superb example of how computer-assisted learning should be integrated with other methods of learning. The *Red Riding Hood* tape contains eight graded activities moving from various matching pictures games to matching letters, then building up to matching words. The children's book contains beautifully illustrated pictures of characters and objects from the story, each one clearly labelled, and children will love listening to the story read on tape by Toni Arthur.

Goldilocks goes on to the next stage of learning to read, which is decoding sentences. Again, the skills are broken down, this time into five graded activities, and, as with the programs, clear instructions are given to the parent as to how best to help the child. The fourth activity, for instance, has been especially designed for the child to play alone (though the parent is advised to be on hand to help if necessary). The random ordering of sentences in this game ensures that the words have to be **read** rather than memorised.

For children up to eight years, *The Enormous Turnip* is a very clever way of teaching letter sounds, word making and spelling. The various computer activities are closely related to the story of the old man who has to rope in all his relatives in order to pull up the huge turnip, and the graphics are superbly entertaining. I particularly liked the mouse which does a somersault when the child gets the answer correct!

Hansel and Gretel is the most difficult of all the reading programs. It introduces some of the more complex letter combinations (words beginning with sl, pl, br) and vowel sounds (as in kite, bone) and gives the child practice in spelling words from the story. This time, the child moves on from using the overlay to spelling the words with the letter keys.

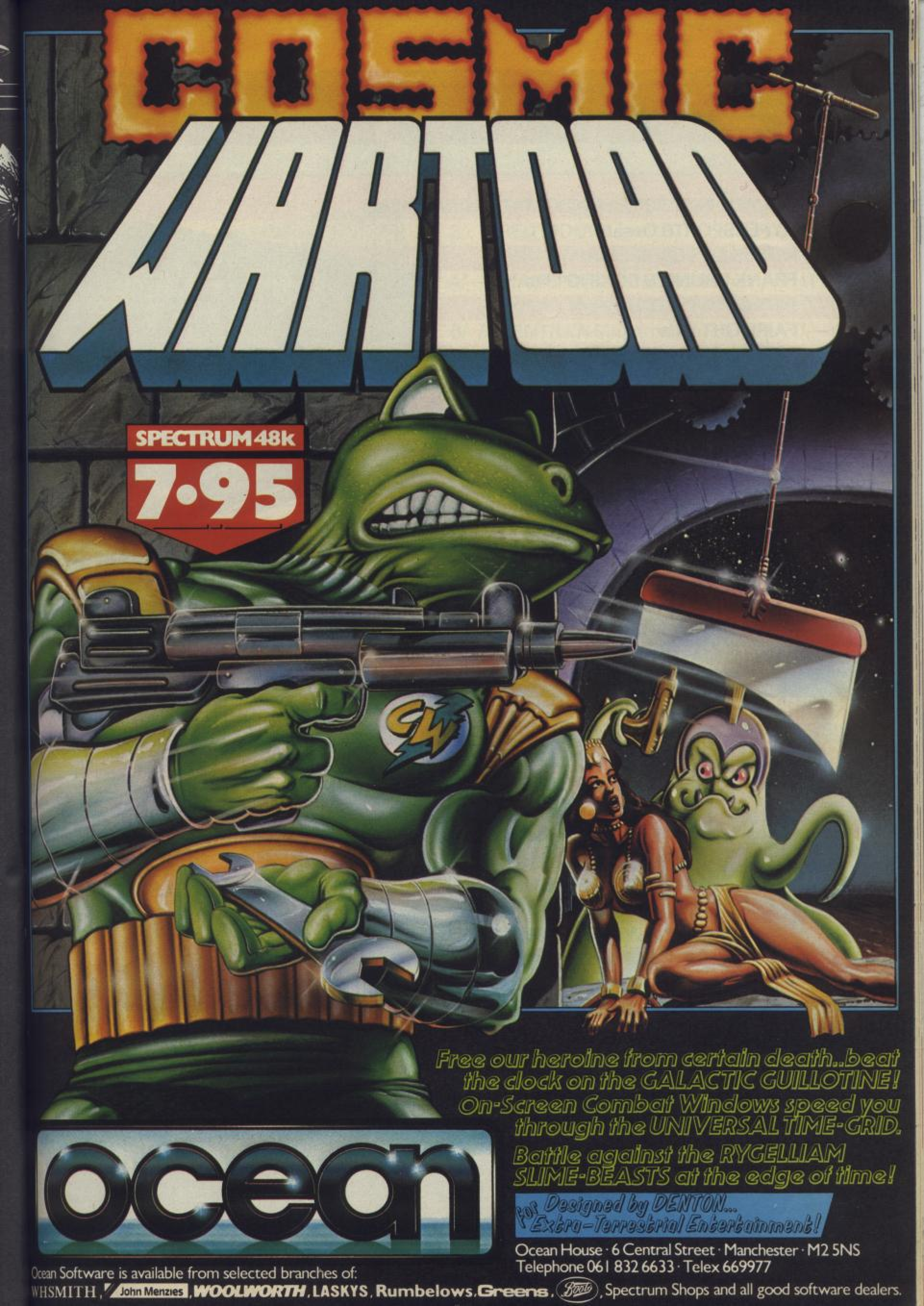


GENERAL RATING

All of the programs succeed remarkably well in their learning-through-play aim. They are interesting and imaginative enough to hold a child's interest, and the variety of carefully graded activities ensures a steady progression of tasks as the child learns. The listening tapes are of a very high quality as are the children's booklets, and the screen graphics are quite excellent. The guides for parents are both comprehensive and informative, giving detailed support to those who are unsure about how to help their children. A great deal of thought has gone into the design of these packages, and they are by far the best series of early learning programs I have seen.

Highly recommended!




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HOTLINE TOP 30 FOR DEC

1 (*2)* **WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST** Melbourne House
2 (*1)* **HYPERSPORTS** Ocean
3 (*9)* **NODES OF YESOD** Odin
4 (*11)* **FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING** Elite
5 (*17)* **DT'S DECATHLON** Ocean
6 (*—)* **FAIRLIGHT** Elite
7 (*12)* **NIGHTSHADE** Ultimate
8 (*8)* **MATCH DAY** Ocean
9 (*4)* **SPY VS SPY** Beyond
10 (*6)* **SHADOWFIRE** Beyond
11 *(14)* **HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER** Vortex
12 *(22)* **DYNAMITE DAN** Mirrorsoft
13 (*7)* **ALIEN 8** Ultimate
14 (*3)* **SPY HUNTER** US Gold
15 *(21)* **FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD** Ocean
16 (*5)* **DUN DARACH** Gargoyle Games
17 *(19)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
18 *(16)* **MATCH POINT** Ocean
19 *(18)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
20 *(—)* **MONTY MOLE** Gremlin Graphics
21 *(10)* **KNIGHTLORE** Ultimate
22 *(—)* **DRAGONTORC** Hewson Consultants
23 *(—)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games
24 *(13)* **STARION** Melbourne House
25 *(—)* **AVALON** Hewson Consultants
26 *(15)* **BRUCE LEE** US Gold
27 *(—)* **WRIGGLER** Romantic Robot
28 *(28)* **WORLD SERIES BASEBALL** Imagine
29 *(27)* **MOON CRESTA** Incentive
30 *(—)* **CHUCKIE EGG 2** A&F

After coming straight in at number two, last month, **Melbourne House**'s *Way of the Exploding Fist* has finally pushed **Ocean**'s *Hypersports* off the number one spot. Another interesting addition to the chart is *Fairlight* by **The Edge** at number 6. Apart from *Spy Hunter* plunging eleven places to number fourteen and *Marsport* making an unimpressive entry at twenty-three, little else has changed since last month.



HOTLINE CHART WINNERS
This month, the winning prize goes to **C Jackson** from Tyne & Wear. Runners up are: **Sean Rone** of Worthing; **Paul Ryan** of London; **Brian Treadwell** from Ellesmere Port and **Dave Edwards** of Manchester.

NEW BRILL 'N' FAB HOTLINE PRIZES!!!

The CRASH HOTLINE & ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart. It depends entirely on your support and we need your votes. There's now only ONE WAY to submit your votes, and that's by sending them to us in the mail. Use the coupons which normally lurk on page 122 (ish), or a photocopy or even hand-tooled Moroccan parchment to whizz your votes to us.

Remember, every month we draw out ten winning forms, five for each chart and the first out of each sack receives £40 WORTH OF SOFTWARE plus a CRASH T-SHIRT. Then the four runners up in each chart will win their very own CRASH T-Shirt and a CRASH CAP which they can use to impress their friends, make their enemies envious and generally show off with!

ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART



After coming in at number one, last issue (what style!) Level 9 have been pushed out of the number one spot by **Hutchinson's** *Fourth Protocol*. It's interesting to see that despite the domination by Level 9 and Adventure International, some old favourites like *The Hobbit* and *Twin Kingdom Valley* still make a showing. Notice how the top ten is absolutely packed with strong graphic adventures. Is this a sign for future game presentation?

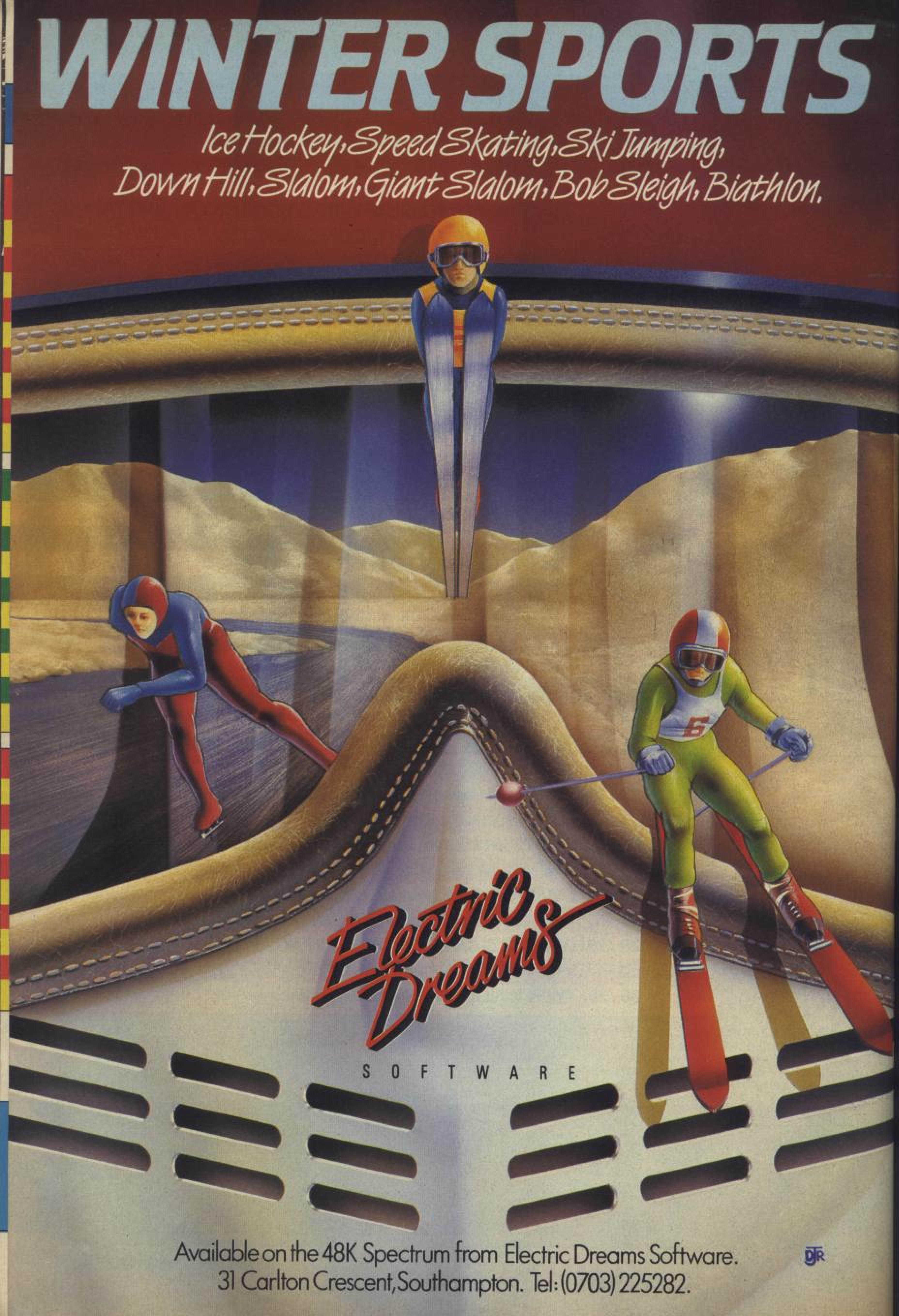
1 *(2)* **FOURTH PROTOCOL** Hutchinson
2 *(1)* **RED MOON** Level 9
3 *(3)* **DUN DARACH** Gargoyle Games
4 *(—)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games
5 *(9)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
6 *(8)* **KENTILLA** Micromega
7 *(5)* **LORDS OF TIME** Level 9
8 *(—)* **FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD** Ocean
9 *(6)* **SHADOWFIRE** Beyond
10 *(24)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Level 9

11 *(28)* **WITCHES COULDRON** Micro-Gen
12 *(—)* **RUNES OF ZENDOS** Dorcas
13 *(17)* **OUT OF THE SHADOWS** Mizar
14 *(20)* **RETURN TO EDEN** Level 9
15 *(11)* **DRAGONTORC** Hewson Consultants
16 *(7)* **SHERLOCK** Melbourne House
17 *(10)* **TIR NA NOG** Gargoyle Games
18 *(22)* **URBAN UPSTART** Richard Shepard
19 *(27)* **HAMPSTEAD** Melbourne House
20 *(19)* **GREMLINS** Adventure International

21 *(21)* **THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
22 *(16)* **AVALON** Hewson Consultants
23 *(13)* **EUREKA** Domark
24 *(15)* **SNOWBALL** Level 9
25 *(23)* **VALHALLA** Legend
26 *(14)* **EMERALD ISLE** Level 9
27 *(12)* **THE HULK** Adventure International
28 *(30)* **ORACLE'S CAVE** Dorcas
29 *(—)* **VALKYRIE 17** Palace
30 *(26)* **TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY** Bug-Byte

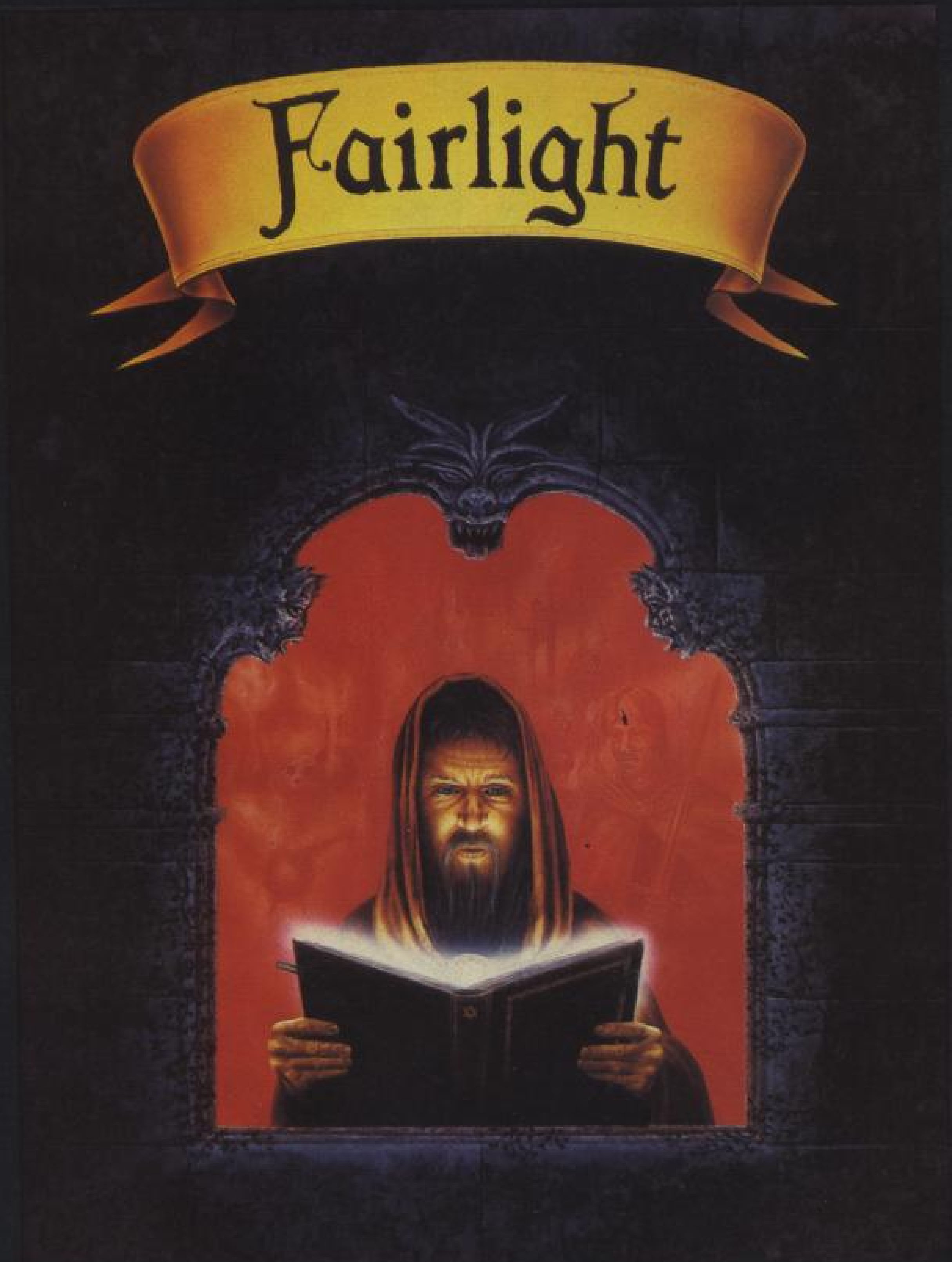
ADVENTURE CHART WINNERS
This month's winner is Hayden Reeve of Boston Spa. The runners up are: **Adrian Wright** from Newport: **Richard Holgate** from Doncaster; **Simon Clifford** of Aylesbury and **Simon Johnston** of Tunbridge Wells, Kent.




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BY BO JANGEBORG

(author of 'The Artist')

"Maybe *the* game of the year!"
Your Spectrum, November 1985

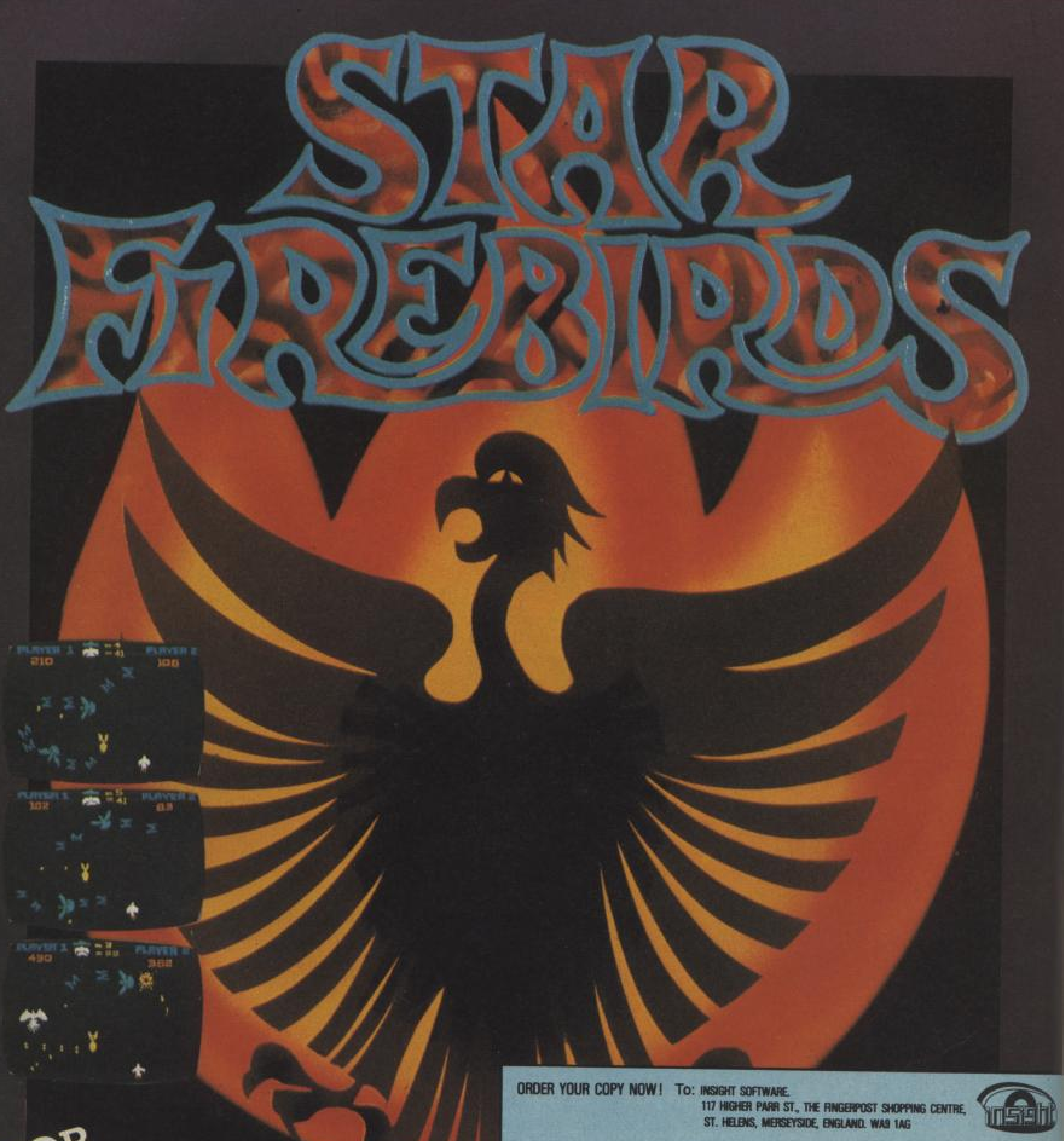
". . . one of the most sophisticated games the Spectrum has ever seen."
". . . one of the ten best programs ever made for the Spectrum."
Popular Computing Weekly, October 1985.

". . . the best arcade adventure of the year."
Your Spectrum, November 1985

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TECH NICHE T

DIGITAL TAPE RECORDING WITH MIDI

Jon Bates continues his MIDI musings . . .



This month, in the continuing Saga of MIDI, we take a look at two interface devices which turn the Spectrum into a very powerful music processor. Linked via cables to a MIDI compatible synthesiser, both interfaces offer the user a staggering array of musical possibilities, the results of which can be stunning. Your 'umble reviewer managed to get each of them to turn out not only Axel F, **but also a pretty decent version of Elgar's** Introduction and Allegro for Strings **(pretty classy, huh?)**

Enough bragging, and down to the hard and software. The main difference between the two systems as reviewed here is that the Performer is a real time sequencer and the Micon is a step time sequencer. It must be said, however, that both interfaces have software available and in the pipeline that will extend their possibilities.

MIDITRACK PERFORMER

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£120.00
0702 335747

The hardware comprises two small and tough plastic cases connected by a short ribbon cable. One part plugs in to the Spectrum's edge connector, while the other has flush-fitted five pin Din sockets to connect it to MIDI instruments. The sockets provide MIDI in, MIDI out (twice) and Clock start/stop, which is used for non MIDI devices such as drum machines or analogue synths that are capable of accepting the old pre-MIDI synchronisation format of 24 clock pulses per second. One nice feature on the unit is the provision of LEDs to indicate whether MIDI data is flowing in or out — handy when you can't work out what's plugged in to what and your connecting cables resemble a bowl of spaghetti.

An eight track tape recorder is capable of recording eight instruments on separate tracks simultaneously; alternatively, a recording can be built up track by track — known as multitracking or overdubbing. What **Miditrack Performer** does is to simulate an eight track digital recorder for approximately one tenth of the price of the real thing. It will record exactly what you play on your keyboard with every subtle nuance and variation in speed, including pitch bending. As there are eight tracks to record onto, even the most ambitious of us will have plenty of room to develop our talents! On loading, the program presents a screen display that gives the status of the tracks. Recording is simple: move the cursor to the track you want, enter 'R' and answer the simple question to confirm that this is indeed your intention — then play away.

When you are happy with your performance you can then record over the top of your first efforts onto a separate track, thus building up the sound. You hear your first track being replayed and can therefore add chords, perhaps, over you original tune. This process can be repeated over and over again — should you look like filling all eight tracks, you have the option of track merging. This combines all previously recorded tracks onto one — leaving lots of space free for more dabbling. There is one serious problem here, though. If you make a mistake, then you have no option but to build that track up all over again, which can be more than a little frustrating.

The program allows you to play as many notes as you wish, including chords, on each track — in other words each track can be polyphonic. The only limitation is the number of notes your synth is capable of playing simultaneously. To keep things in some semblance of order, there is a count-in (user definable) and a metronome option that bleeps away at whatever speed (tempo in musical terms) you want. The display also

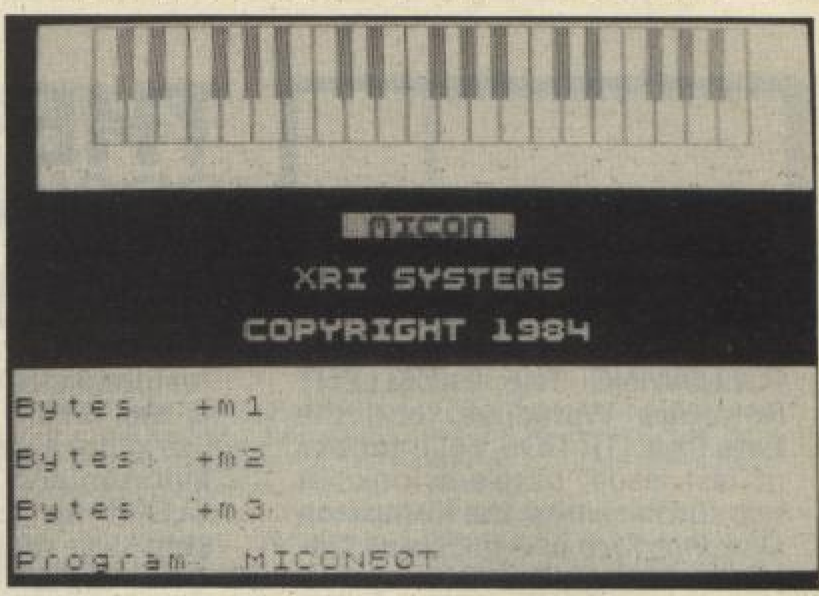
EMR MIDITRACK PERFORMER V1.1								
TRACK	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
PLAY								
CHANNEL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
PITCH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MODE	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
CONTROL	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
BAR 1	START 1		TIME SIG 4/4					
MET Y	TMP 99		CLK I		COUNT 8			



informs you of what bar you are at, and how much memory is left. Even for a beginner, this is pretty simple to follow. I did find the flashing background a trifle annoying, especially as it seemed to go beserk with more complex pieces.

The program comes with excellent documentation, which is easy to follow, and two demo tunes one of which shows you how to build up a piece, track by track. For the professional whizkid the program gives you more options on manipulating each track. You can repeat the whole piece (but not sections), define the number of beats per bar, change the pitch of the track, and if you're blessed with more than one MIDI instrument, you can tell each track which synthesiser it's going to play on. (MIDI instruments can receive on sixteen separate channels). However, you can't get the program to change sounds for you.

The capacity of the program depends on how much information you give it. If there's lots of touch sensitivity information for it to record from your touch sensitive keyboard, for instance, then memory is used up significantly more rapidly. Given a modest synth or two and an average tune, however, lengths of up to fifteen minutes should be possible.

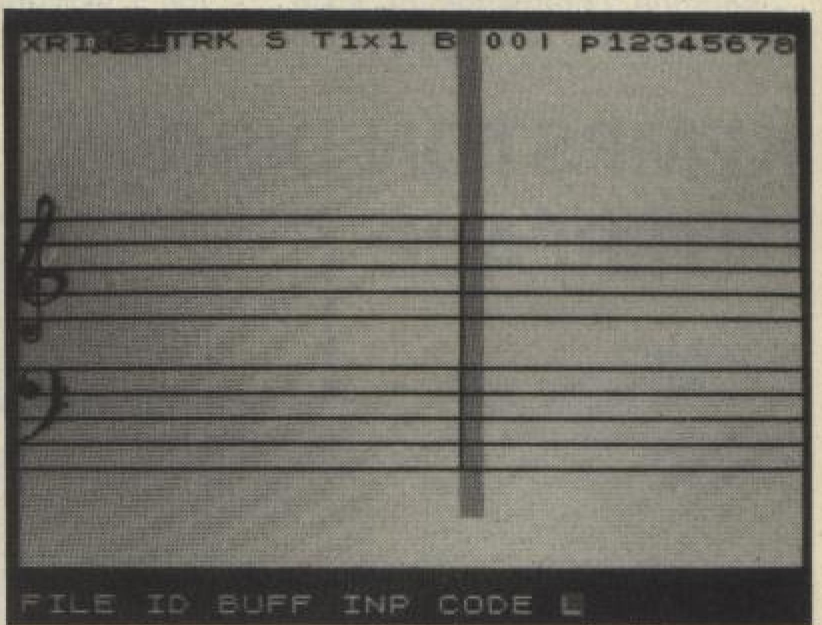


sequencer which allows you to enter rests and pauses as well as notes, as well as expression. A note may be specified as abrupt or smooth in execution (staccato or legato) and the velocity and pressure sensing that some synthesisers are capable of can also be defined for each note.

Micon's editing features are also very powerful. Any note can be removed and replaced at any time, and at any place in your piece. It is also possible to change the sound of the synth from a command inserted within the music. This is known to musical boffins as a 'patch change' — but all it does is tell the synth to stop playing one sound and look elsewhere in its voice library for another.

Any bar can be repeated, and this means that repetitive sequences on just one track can be created with ease. *Axel F* is a case in point, as the bass line is three sequences set to repeat in a certain order. This takes very little time to set up, and the result is very impressive.

Once you have created your recording, you can store it on microdrive — and you can put the program on cartridge too. Most thoughtful of XRI! In short, Micon is an exceptionally powerful composing tool.





MICON

XRI Systems
10 Sunnybank Road
Sutton Coldfield
B73 5RE
£108.00
021 382 6048

Another sturdy box to clip on to your Spectrum's edge connector — this time with MIDI in and out sockets, and two separate sockets for Clock in and out. **Micon** is supplied with copious detailed documentation which I found a bit difficult to follow — although the initial start up procedures of the program are straightforward. However, I understand that XRI are taking their documentation in hand and a rewritten set of instructions in on the stocks.

The Micon is aimed at the more serious musicians amongst us. It's an eight track recorder that has a scrolling music stave screen with excellent notation, but each note has to be entered manually by playing it on a synth and defining its length by tapping the space key.

Each tap on the space key is called an 'event', and each track is capable of holding 2,950 events. Micon is a step-time

CONCLUSIONS

It's a clear case of 'horses for courses' when comparing these two products. On the one hand is the EMR system, MIDITRACK PERFORMER which is easy to use and relates very nicely to the way a tape recorder works. However, it lacks a bit in the editing features and there's no display of the music you've just played. (If there was, it would probably take up most of the remaining memory and render the whole program pretty useless!) In tests, it did give the Casio CZ101 some problems as it kept on reverting to mono mode, but this may have had more to do with the way in which the MIDI code is ordered within the Casio itself than any shortcomings in Performer.

XRI's MICON, on the other hand, has complete and full editing facilities but is rather more laborious to use. However, you do get a real-time sequencing program thrown in as well, and I understand that multi-tracking software is also on its way. XRI also offer additional software to store and edit on screen the voices of Yamaha, Roland and Casio synths, while Miditrack Performer only supports Yamaha equipment in this way at present.

The two systems were tested using a Yamaha DX7 and DX9, a Korg Poly 800 and the acid test was tried using the most modest of set ups, the excellent Casio CZ101. Thanks must go to **Musicmakers** of Selly Oak, Birmingham for supplying the synths used for this and other MIDI reviews . . .

THE EXPRESS GANG PART 3

FOLLOWING THE EXCELLENT Rotronics Wafadrive, and the **Beta Plus** (TR-DOS V4) interface of last issue, here's a look at two further units, the **Kempston** *Disc Interface* and the **Opus** *Discovery 1*. The Kempston belongs to the **Shugart** compatible interfaces and can run with any Shugart standard 3", 3.5" or 5.25" disk drive which incorporate a power supply unit. The drives must however, be capable of double density recording. The *K-DOS* operating system displays itself as an extended BASIC, where commands have to be called up via a PRINT#4 command. This proves to be laborious and a lot more effort is required when comparing with the simple *Beta* operating commands or even the *Rotronics* and *Microdrive* extended commands. A nice feature for BASIC programmers is the BASIC OVERLAY facility using the excellent MERGE with autorun, and the line definable CLEAR functions. The **Kempston** unit must be the smallest disk interface for the Spectrum, but this isn't necessarily a plus, as there is no extension port for other peripherals.

The Opus *Discovery 1* is probably the most comprehensive add-on for the Spectrum next to the **Timex** drive. It incorporates a 3.5" disk drive, a parallel printer interface, a Kempston compatible joystick interface and a monitor output port and provides an expansion port for any further peripherals. The **Opus** *Discovery 1* comes as a fully integrated unit, into which the Spectrum 48K or Spectrum Plus plugs. Provision is made to incorporate a second drive, but for this the unit has to be returned to the factory. The operating system is similar to the microdrive extended BASIC and the various ports for printer and joystick are accessed via separate streams. The **Opus** *Discovery 1* is the ideal unit for users who abhor a multitude of separate enclosures and cables littering their precious desk space.

The next issue will feature the **Timex** disk drive and a complete comparison table featuring all the fast storage devices looked at in this series will summarise the various findings.

KEMPSTON DISC INTERFACE

HARDWARE:
The **Kempston** disc interface must be the smallest unit of the series, measuring only 100 x 67mm. It has no expansion port and must therefore be connected as last in the chain of addons. Up to four disc drives (40 or 80 track, single or double sided) may be connected via a Shugart compatible 34-way IDC cable. To save space or cost the 34-way plug is not polarised, which means a trial and error connection. No harm can be done, as the Shugart pin layout only uses one side of the connector. A power indicator and a reset button are incorporated in the unit.

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION:
On powering up the system, the Spectrum will display the copyright message to indicate the presence of the **Kempston** *DOS*. This *K-DOS* can be included on the same line as BASIC statements, but care should be taken with standard PRINT statements, as these must be separated by use of a double colon to distinguish them from the parameter passing PRINT statements.

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION:
On powering up the system, the Spectrum will display the copyright message to indicate the presence of the **Kempston** *DOS*. This *K-DOS* is an extension of the Sinclair BASIC and is implemented via a software switch triggered by a PRINT 4 command. Parameters are passed on via a further PRINT statement. *K-DOS* can be included on the same line as BASIC statements, but care should be taken with standard PRINT statements, as these must be separated by use of a double colon to distinguish them from the parameter passing PRINT statements.

OPERATING SYSTEM:
Kempston *DOS* Version 2.0

SYSTEM COMMANDS:
All commands with the exception of INPUT#, PRINT# and INKEY$# are preceded by PRINT#4:
CAT:PRINT d *gives a catalogue of all files of drive d (1-4)*
CAT:PRINT d, "string" *gives a catalogue of all files on drive d, whose name contains "string"*



CLEAR:PRINT m1, m2 *deletes a block of BASIC lines starting at m1 and ending with m2*

COPY:PRINT d *is a tape to disc transfer utility which allows the transfer of post unprotected cassette programs to disc. The command batch processes the tape files until a BREAK is detected. The tape must be stopped on a command prompt to allow block storage to disc. On saving, the command displays the filename, the start address and the length of file in decimal notation. Headerless blocks are saved using a "default n" filename. A break into the BASIC loader allows the modification of LOAD, SAVE and MERGE to K-DOS syntax. The transfer of tape programs obviously requires some knowledge of BASIC and possibly machine code.*

ERASE "filename" *erases "filename" from the directory of the current drive. The* UP ARROW *acts as a* WILD CARD *character*

ERASE "filename":PRINT d *erases "filename" from the directory on drive d*

FORMAT "diskname":PRINT i, j, k, l *formats a disc on drive i (1-4) with j tracks (35,40 or 80), k sides (1 or 2) and l stepping rate (6, 12, 20 or 30ms delay)*

GOTO m *forces a BASIC program to jump to line m on any error (Error trapping)*

INKEY$#n *reads the next character of a sequential file opened to stream n (n can be 0 to 15 with the exclusion of 4)*

INPUT#n; var1; var2; ... *reads the next record of a sequential file opened to stream n*

LOAD "filename" filetype: PRINT d *loads a program from the specified drive. The drive specifier is optional. The filetype may be CODE, SCREEN$, DATA a(), DATA a$() etc. Programs will AUTO-BOOT after a reset or power on if they are saved as file "AUTO" with a line number*

MERGE "filename":PRINT d *loads a BASIC file from the specified drive and merges it with the program currently in memory. This function provides the use of BASIC overlays to reduce the memory requirement of large BASIC programs by autorunning from the linenumber specified in the SAVE function after having been merged in the main program residing in RAM. K-DOS's CLEAR acts as a block delete to prevent the execution of lines from the previous program.*

MOVE "file1","file2":PRINT d1, d2 *copies files from a specified drive to another specified drive. It can also rename files or discs on the same specified drive (Back-up on same disc). For single drive users d1 equals d2 and prompts for disc change are displayed automatically. If filename2 is a nullstring, then a copy with the same name as the sourcefile (filename1) is created. Block copy is performed if filename1 is the nullstring. This option allows the back-up of a complete disc to be made. With filename1 a nullstring and a specified filename2 any files on the specified drive with the substring filename2 will be copied to the specified drive. This is useful for file extension systems (MOVE" ", "/BAS":PRINT d1,d2 copies all files on drive1 with the extension/BAS to drive 2)*

NEW *is similar to BASIC NEW with the exception that* K-DOS *remains enabled (*K-DOS *variables are not cleared)*

OPEN#n,"filename":PRINT d *opens a stream n to a sequential file "filename" of the specified drive d and assigns a buffer to it. If the file already exists, it is opened for reading, otherwise for writing*

PRINT#n; var1' var2' *writes records var1, var2 etc. into buffer n for transfer to a sequential file*

SAVE "filename" LINE m:PRINT d *saves the BASIC program "filename" onto the specified drive d. The drive specification can be omitted if it is the current drive. The optional line number will provide autorun from the specified line. If the filename is "AUTO" the program will autoboot when loaded.*

SAVE "filename" filetype: PRINT d saves CODE, SCREEN$, DATA a(), DATA a$() etc.

ERROR REPORTS:
27 error reports

EXTRA FACILITIES:
None

MANUAL:
24 page manual with introduction, installation, explanation of disc interface commands, error messages and *K-DOS* summary.

APPLICATION PROGRAMS:
None

CRITICISM:
Slow access times.
Complicated command structure with PRINT#4 calls.
Complicated handling of variables with the use of PRINT statements.
No machine code access to the DOS commands due to lack of information.

COMMENTS:
Average disc interface with good CLEAR and MERGE commands enabling simple BASIC OVERLAY system configuration.

MEDIA:
Depends on drives connected.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS:
Number of drives supported per system: 4
Storage capacity depending on drives connected.

PRICE:
£85 including VAT

OPUS DISCOVERY 1

HARDWARE:
The disk drive is integrated in a large metal housing painted in black and incorporates the 3.5" disk drive and the large interface card with a parallel printer interface, a software switchable **Kempston** protocol joystick interface and a monochrome composite video output. The unit also features an extension port for further peripherals, but the NMI line on A14 is not brought out, which means further ROM based peripherals cannot be connected. Provision is made for a second disc drive which may be fitted into the unit by purchasing the **Discovery Plus** package. This, however, must be installed by the **Opus** factory. **Discovery 1** accommodates both the Spectrum and the Spectrum Plus, and both computers may be screwed permanently to the unit.

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION:
Except for minor differences, the **Discovery 1** system is completely software compatible at command level with the microdrive system and includes some extra extensions to various commands. Streams and channels are used for the access to the individual input and output devices. The main channels are: K for input from keyboard and output to the lower part of the screen; S output to the upper part of the screen; P for output to the ZX printer; M for input and output to a disk file; B for binary input or output to the parallel port; T for ASCII input or output to the parallel port; CAT for access to the disk catalogue file; CODE for writing or reading directly to memory; D for disk access used in conjunction with a MOVE command; J for switching the joystick port on and off and # to open one stream to another.

An excellent feature provided by **Discovery 1** is the possibility of creating a RAM disk within the Spectrum RAM area for fast file handling. To this purpose the RAM area needs to be formatted similar to a normal disk and files created or transferred to the RAM disk area for processing. When the processing is completed, the files may be moved back onto disk for permanent storage.

Data storage can be performed via serial or random access files. An existing datafile may be extended with the use of the EXP command extension, random access requires the setting up of fixed record lengths when opening a new random access file.

The **Discovery 1** is a 2 drive system using only one drive. By using drive 1 and drive 3 the operating system remembers which disk is currently in the drive and asks for a change of disks whenever it needs to write or read from the other disk. The **Discovery 1** has a socket for a 2K RAM chip and this may optionally be fitted. All the operating system tables get copied into it and this means the whole drive system may be configured. New commands and channels may be added and error messages changed. All the floppy disk parameters are stored in the RAM chip and this means that **Discovery** can be used with any sized disk. The sector size may be changed to 1024 bytes for very fast operation or to 128 bytes for memory saving applications.

The RAM disk may also be reconfigured to reside anywhere in memory, be of any length and even have a variable block size. Programming expertise is a requirement for this kind of configuring, but Opus will provide technical information for machine code programming.

SYSTEM COMMANDS1:

CAT(drive) *displays the catalogue of the disk in the specified drive*

CAT#(stream); (drive) *sends the catalogue of the disk in the specified drive to the given stream*

CLEAR# *clears out all open streams and makes them available for further use*

CLEAR# (stream) *clears out the specified stream*

CLOSE#(stream) *closes the specified stream*

CLS# *clears the screen and sets the display attributes to their defaults*

CODE(start address), (no. of bytes) **is an extension to the LOAD*, VERIFY* and SAVE* commands which allows a block of memory to be saved, loaded or verified**

DATA(array name) () *is an extension to the LOAD*, VERIFY* and SAVE* commands which can be used to save and load numeric or string arrays*

ERASE(file spec.) *erases the specified file*

FORMAT *is used to set up channels "j", "m" and "d"*

FORMAT "j"; (status) *is used to turn the joystick on or off*

FORMAT"m"; (drive); "(drive title)" *is used to format a disk. "m" may be omitted since it is the default channel. To set up a RAM disk, a RAM area has to be cleared and drive number 5 used: CLEAR 32767 ENTER followed by FORMAT 5; "ramd" after which the disk system will recognize RAM disk as disk number 5*

INKEY$# (stream) *reads one character from the specified stream. If the stream is associated with an "m" channel the command will only return a null string when EOF has been reached. Other slow channels ("K", "t" and "b") will return a null string when a character is not available*

INPUT#(stream); var1; var2; *. . . inputs values from the specified stream. If used when inputting from a file, the variable list must be separated by semicolons and not commas to make sure there is no output to the stream. In the file the values to be read must be separated by the ENTER character*

LOAD*(channel spec.) *loads a programme and variables from the channel specified*

LPRINT#(stream); var1, var2, *. . . prints the values of variables in the variable list to the specified stream*

LPRINT *sends the variables to the stream 3 (the ZX printer)*

LLIST *lists the programme to stream 3 (the ZX printer). To list programmes using the parallel port stream 3 must be opened to the "t" channel*

MERGE*(channel spec.) *merges a programme and variables with the programme and variables already in the memory*

MOVE A TO B *transfers information from an input channel or stream A to an output channel or stream B. The process is terminated with an End Of File. For input from a slow channel, an End of File must be generated by pressing SHIFT and ENTER simultaneously*

OPEN#(stream); (channel spec.) (access) *associates the specified stream with the channel given. Possible types of access are IN or OUT. For the "m" channel the following options are available: EXP expands a serial file for output only and RND allows input and output for random access files*

OPEN#4; "m"; 1; "sample" RND 15,10 creates a random access file "sample" with a record length of 15 bytes and with room for 10 records. For the "t" channel a printer width can be specified: OPEN#4; "t"; 0 RND 80

POINT#(stream); (record number) *sets the file pointer to the start of the given record in random access files*

PRINT#(stream); var1; var2; *. . . prints the values in the variable list to the specified stream*

SAVE*(channel spec.) *saves the current programme and variables to the specified channel. If a BASIC programme is saved with the filename "RUN" followed by the LINE extension, the programme will automatically run after being loaded*

USR 0 *resets the Spectrum, but not the disk system*

USR 14070 *resets the Spectrum and the disk system*

USR 8 *returns the version number of the disk software*

USR 432 *returns the number of bytes remaining in the current stream*



ERROR REPORTS:
13 error reports.

EXTRA FACILITIES:
Centronics parallel printer port, software switchable **Kempston** type joystick port and monochrome composite video monitor output.

MANUAL:
Comprehensive 34 page manual with extensive introduction to the disk system, detailed description of the operating procedures, command reference guide, error reports description and connector details.

APPLICATION PROGRAMS:
None included. Selection of disk software available from Boots.

CRITICISM:
None

COMMENTS:
Comprehensive disk system with good extended BASIC commands, excellent filehandling facilities including random access file management, time saving RAM DISK feature and host of extras such as the parallel printer port, joystick interface and monochrome video output.

MEDIA:
3.5" hard cased disks as used with Amstrad and Tatung computers. Price of media: Single sided from £2.40 to £4.10 excl. VAT, double sided from £3.60 to £4.75.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION:
Number of drives per system: 2
Storage capacity: 180 Kbytes per side
Number of tracks: 40
Number of sectors per track: 18
Sector size: 256 bytes

TIMING:
Formatting: approx. 17.5 sec
Cataloguing: approx. 4sec
Loading a screen: approx. 4sec

PRICE:
£199.95 including VAT

SPEC-MATE

Producer: AT & Y Computing Ltd.
Price: £32.95 incl. VAT (P&P for Europe £2, outside Europe £4)

A MATE FOR YOUR SPECTRUM?

Yet another peripheral for transfer of protected commercial software is AT & Y's **SPEC-MATE**. Unique in that it can transfer programs to tape at normal or double speed, to the Challenge Sprint tape recorder, microdrive, Wafadrive and last but not least to the BETA disk drive system (Version 3.0). **SPEC-MATE** seems to resolve any kind of transfer problems for less that £40.00, but does the transfer fee also include a lot of hassle and lots of debugging?

SPEC-MATE could be mistaken for another of the long line of uncharacteristic looking joystick interfaces housed in a non descript black box. An extension port and a push switch at the top right of the unit are the only visible features.

The transfer procedure is simplicity itself. After installing **SPEC-MATE**, the program is

loaded in the normal way and run. It can be frozen at any point by just pressing the push-button. The border flashes for a second and then turns black. This is where the first of up to four selections have to be made. The first decision is whether to save to tape (t), to microdrive (m), to BETA disk (d), to Wafadrive or to save at double speed to tape (f). A further option lets you examine the screen for any hidden data by removing the screen colours.

Pressing the required option takes you to the red border mode. Here you decide how to save the program — with or without the loading screen. 'N' saves the program with the frozen screen, 'S' saves it without any screen. If you want to save the loading screen as well, you need to load the program until the full loading screen is visible and then interrupt the loading. Then, In red border mode, select 'A' which saves the screen. Next, you need to reload the program entirely, freeze it and then select 'B' in the red border mode to save the program itself.

After the red border mode comes the blue border mode which allows you to specify which part of the screen area **SPEC-MATE** will use for its work data. It requires a third of the screen as workspace and, as some programs have hidden data in some area of the screen, it is important that you can choose which part of the screen **SPEC-MATE** is to use. If you choose the wrong section of the screen, hidden data is overwritten by **SPEC-MATE** and the program crashes.

Last of the border modes is magenta, which allows you to enter the name of the program after which ENTER starts the saving procedure. If backing up to tape, the tape recorder should be in recording mode. If everything is hunkydory, the program will unfreeze and continue running. If it doesn't, the back-up will not have been successful and you may have selected the wrong part of the screen memory for **SPEC-MATE** to use.

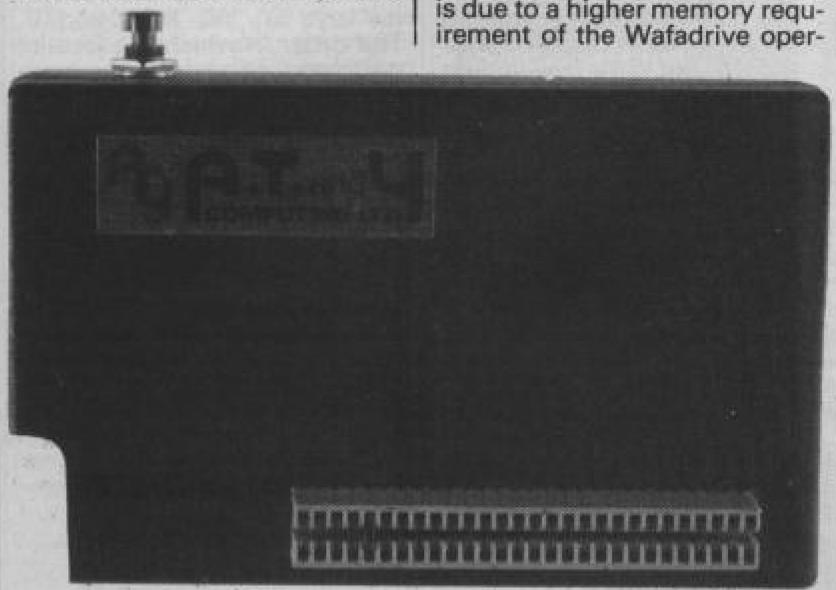
If saving to Wafadrive, the red and blue border mode are skipped. The only other difference in procedure between the various back-up media is number of characters allowed in the title.

Several programs were backed up successfully onto various media and **SPEC-MATE** seemed to perform both well and as promised. Saving at double speed to tape was impressive, reducing the loading time of *Way of the Exploding Fist* from 4min 33sec to 2min 10sec, for instance. A certain amount of trial and error may be necessary to secure a successful save — some programs may not save out if they are frozen at certain points during execution, while the choice of screen area for **SPEC-MATE**'s workspace is also critical.

Not all programs load successfully to Wafadrive. Barry Blitz of AT & Y explains that this is due to a higher memory requirement of the Wafadrive operating system work area. He reckons that about 80% of programs will transfer easily to Wafadrive. Further problems were encountered with the BETA disk interface. Apparently there are several sub-versions of version 3.0 DOS. At present only particular issues of the BETA DOS 3.0 seem to work with **SPEC-MATE**. It appears that earlier versions of the DOS have different call addresses and the drive does not respond. Barry believes that Cumana have batches of earlier versions still on sale. AT & Y is investigating the possibility of accommodating these earlier versions into the **SPEC-MATE** ROM. Also on line is an improved version of **SPEC-MATE** which will be able to operate with the OPUS disk drive system (in 2-3 weeks).

File handling programs such as **TASWORD** can be saved with their files to produce working versions on Wafadrive or disk. An interesting feature of **SPEC-MATE** is the fact that back-up programs run without the presence of **SPEC-MATE**: they are fully independent. Perhaps this is the reason why AT & Y stress in the **SPEC-MATE** manual the point of not pirating software...

Franco Frey



TECH TIPS

When Sinclair produced the Spectrum they missed out a few features which could have been added at next to no cost. Here at TECH TIPS we plan to unveil a range of bolt-on goodies for your budget micro. The world's cheapest joystick interface comes your way in this monthly's column, courtesy of Simon Goodwin.

INSTANT INTERFACING (well, almost!)

Assuming you've already got a joystick, this Sinclair protocol interface can be made for the price of a socket and six bits of wire. The cost zooms up to that of two sockets and twelve bits of wire if you want to go the whole hog and fit a two-player interface — this means you can emulate both of the ports on Interface 2.

A WORD OF WARNING

This project is going to involve you in opening up your Spectrum (or Spectrum Plus) and soldering some wires onto the circuit-board. This will invalidate your guarantee so we recommend that you give this project a miss if your computer is still under warranty. This is a simple project but it is aimed at those with some previous (successful) experience of electronic soldering. The Spectrum is a complicated beast squashed into a tiny box, and it is all too easy to fry its guts if you're not careful. CRASH can't accept the blame if you saute your Spectrum!

That said, the project is fairly straightforward so long as you follow the instructions carefully — I've included comprehensive fault-finding hints which make most problems easy to diagnose. It should only take you about half an hour to wire up the interface and test it. The only tools needed are a cross-point screwdriver and a low-wattage (under 25w) soldering iron with a small (1-2mm) bit. You'll also need some solder and six short pieces of thin insulated wire.

INSIDE THE SPECTRUM

Sinclair are famous for never using two components where one would do, and the Spectrum keyboard is no exception to this rule. There are 40 keys on a Spectrum, packed into a grid of five columns and eight rows. The computer decides which key is pressed by sending a signal down one of the eight rows, and seeing what value appears at the end of the columns. *Figure 1* shows the circuit and the way that current flows when the '7' key is pressed.

The lines in the circuit diagram have been straightened out to make the 'grid' easy to see — the wires under the keyboard snake about to give the familiar key layout. The same grid of 40 switches is used on the Spectrum Plus, and the 'extra' keys work little plastic arms which make connections on the grid in combination and sequence — giving the effect of shifted keystrokes in a purely mechanical way. It was easy to find this out on early Spectrum pluses since the key-tops would obligingly fall off if you held the computer upside down and shook it — nowadays Sinclair stick the keys on more firmly.

A joystick is really just a group of five switches — up, down, left, right and fire — in a neat box. When you push the stick forward an arm reaches out inside the box and presses the 'up' switch, and so on. Diagonal movements cause two switches to be pressed at once.

The computer must send a signal to the joystick in order to detect which switches are pressed. This 'Common' signal is taken to each switch, as shown in *Figure 2*. Five wires go from the switches back to the computer, which can tell whether or not a switch is closed by the presence or absence of the signal at the end of the corresponding wire. The signal is strong enough to go through three of the switches at once, if need be — this happens when the stick is held in a diagonal position, with the fire button pressed.

If you look at *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* together you should see that the circuit of the joystick is the same as that of one row from the keyboard.

You could (in theory) wire up eight joysticks in place of your keyboard, and 'type' by wiggling the sticks and pressing their fire buttons. Each joystick's 'common' signal would be wired to a different row, and all of the other wires would be collected into five columns of eight. I say 'in theory' because I don't know anyone who has tried it — and unless you're an octopus you're probably better off with the keyboard that comes with the computer, 'dead flesh' or clatter not withstanding.

What may not be obvious is the fact that you can wire joysticks into the grid AS WELL AS the existing key-switches. *Figure 3* shows this idea, with a joystick wired into the row for the keys 'Q', 'W', 'E', 'R' and 'T'. The order in which the joystick switches are shown has been reversed, to make the picture clearer, but this does not affect the wiring (the real switches aren't in a straight line anyway.). Whether a switch is closed in the keyboard or the joystick, the signal makes its way down one of the five columns. Each switch in the joystick corresponds to a key on the keyboard. In fact the wiring shown in *Figure 3* makes joystick movements mimic the keyboard controls of Ultimate's early games *Pssst* and *Cookie*.

This is an old trick, dating back to Sinclair's first BASIC computer, the ZX80, and beyond. I

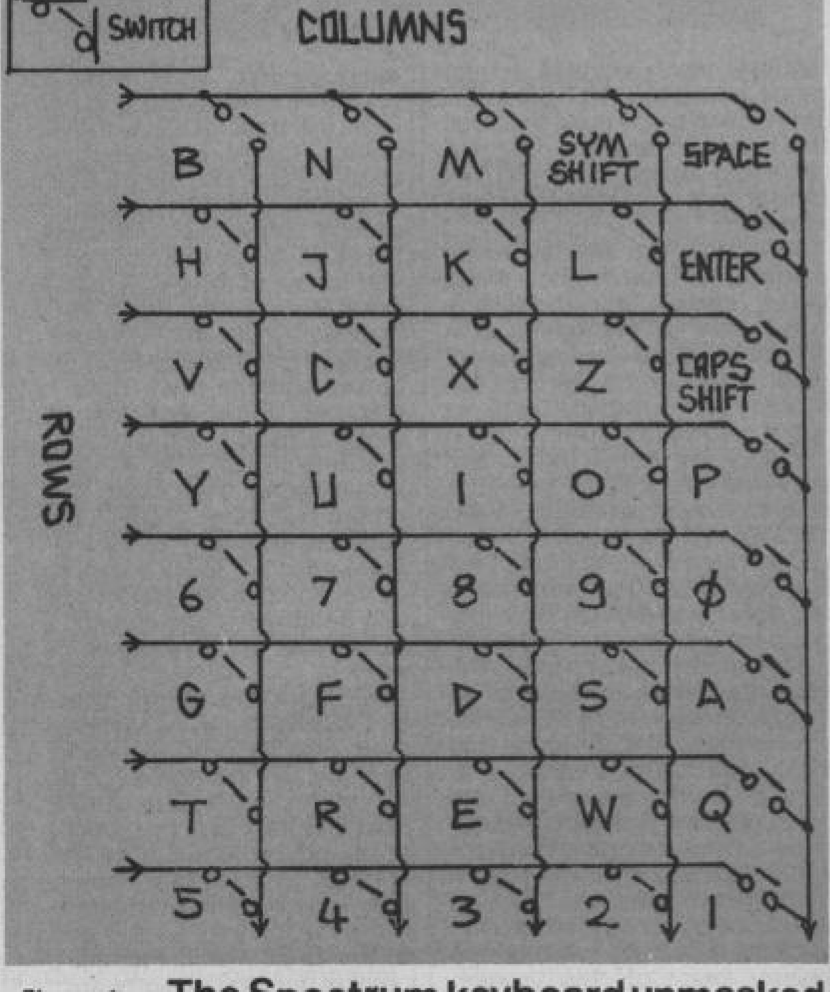


Figure 1 **The Spectrum keyboard unmasked**

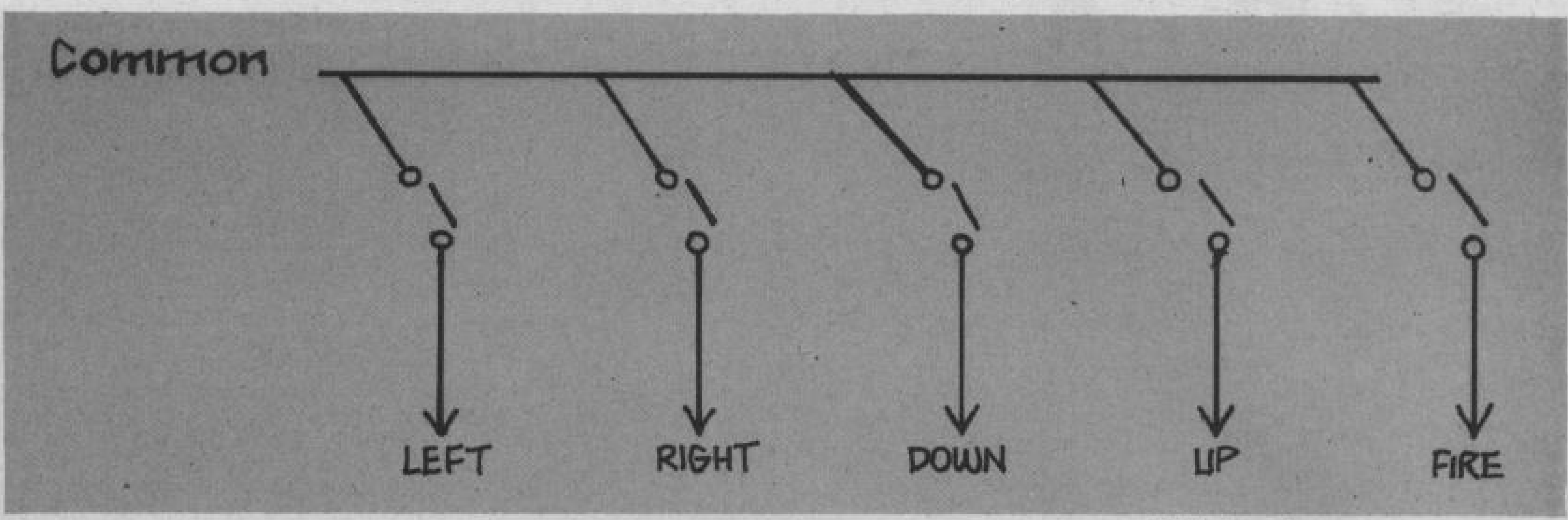


Figure 2

Wiring inside a joystick

first tried it on the Spectrum back in 1982, when a 48K machine with a rubber keyboard cost £180. I voided my guarantee in the process, but my machine survived the surgery and it still works now, having been used heavily for several years now. This project has stood the test of time.

UNMIXED BLESSINGS

The main snag of mimicking the keyboard is that you have to connect the joystick's 'common' wire to one of the eight rows, and therefore you're stuck with the eight groups of keys shown in Figure 1. You can't mix characters from more than one row, because the joystick only gives one 'common' signal. You can't just wire two rows together, since that would make it impossible for the Spectrum to tell between them.

Of course, you can play about with the sequence in which the joystick functions correspond to the keys within a group. If you interchange the up and down wires, for instance, you can cheat in most cockpit 3D games by cancelling the disconcerting control reversal which makes your viewpoint move UP when you push the joystick forward.

If you study *Figure 3* you may spot that you could get five characters, each from a different row, by connecting the joysticks 'common' wire to a column, rather than a row. This is not often useful but the arrangement does suit some games, such as New Generation's golden oldie *3D Tunnel*.

There ARE ways to get a joystick to simulate keys which are not all from the same group — an AGF joystick interface does simulate keys 5, 6, 7, 8 and 0, although 5 is in a different group to the other characters. Given a few chips (and a lot of sockets!) you can even build a patch-programmable' interface where each joystick action can be assigned to any key. The Comcon interface does this, but it costs a lot more than this project! We'll keep things cheap and cheerful and restrict ourselves to simple wiring.

DISSECTING YOUR SPECTRUM

Our aim is to connect a 9-pin joystick socket to the Spectrum, via a short lead. We need to solder six wires to the joystick socket, as shown in *Figure 4* — the view is taken from the BACK (solder side) of the socket. This socket is the only part of this project which may be hard to obtain: most electronics shops and mail-order component suppliers will be able to supply the socket, known in the trade as a "male 9-pin D-type connector".

If you get stuck you can use any other type of connector which can cope with six separate signals — on my prototype I used a 5 pin DIN plug, with the screen connection for the common wire. The snag of doing this is that you have to change the plug on the end of your joystick lead . . .

Once you've soldered the wires in place you should end up with a socket with six leads, 150-250mm long, hanging off it. The other end of each wire will go into the heart of the Spectrum.

Before you take the Spectrum apart you should disconnect the power supply and any interfaces. Turn your machine so that the keyboard faces downwards. If you've got a Spectrum Plus you should be able to see seven screws around the lip of the box — three on either side and one in the middle at the front and an eighth screw under the warranty sticker half way along the back. The old-model Spectrum has only five screws — one in each corner and an extra one at the middle of the back edge of the computer, close to the edge-connector.

Undo these screws with a cross-point screwdriver, and put them somewhere safe, they'll come in very handy when you re-assemble the machine later! Turn the computer back the right way up, and gently lift off the top part of the box — it should come away without any need for force.

As you remove the top you can see two ribbon cables running from the keyboard to the circuit-board in the base of the box.

Reach under the keyboard to one of the cables and grip it firmly between finger and thumb, close to the point where it plugs into the circuit board. Slowly and evenly pull the cable out of its socket. Do the same for the other cable, and then lift the keyboard away from the base of the computer.

The next step is to take the circuit assembly out of the computer, so that you can solder some wires onto the back of the

These cables are fragile so they should be treated with great care. Prop up the top of the computer at an angle, like a car bonnet. Make a note of the position of the two sockets into which the ribbon cables fit — your joystick adaptor wires will be soldered onto the back of these sockets.

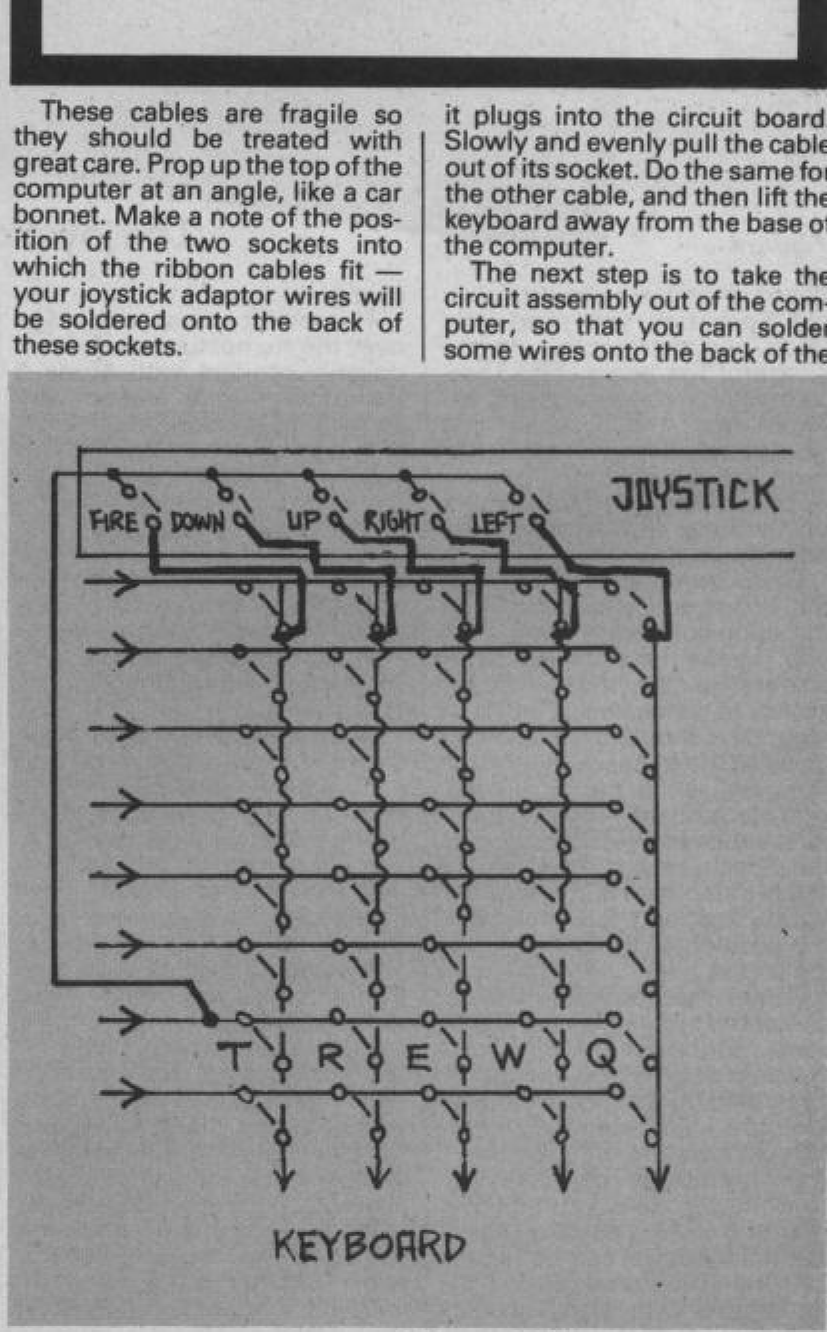


Figure 3

A joystick connected to mimic keys Q,W,E,R and T

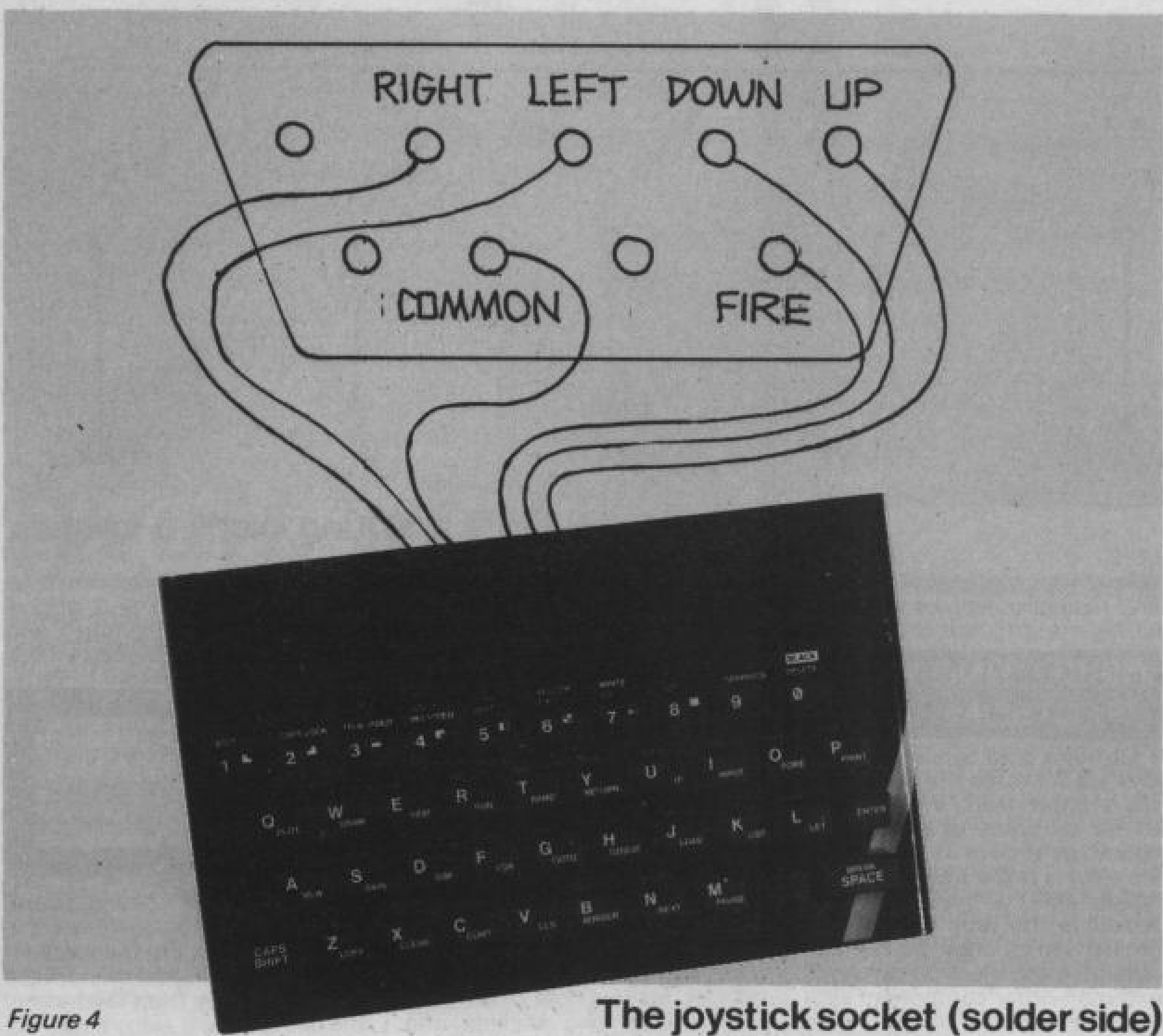


Figure 4

The joystick socket (solder side)

board. If you are dissecting an old Spectrum, you need only undo one more screw, in the centre of the board. The Spectrum Plus circuit-board is no different from the board in late models of the ordinary Spectrum, but it is held in differently — by two screws at the corners on the long edge opposite the edge connector.

Undo these screws and turn the board solder-side up, with the edge-connector away from you. Identify the two rows of soldered joints at the back of the keyboard connector. The row of eight pins should be on the left, close to the beeper. The row of five pins is on the right-hand side of the board — its exact position varies between versions of the Spectrum but it should be easily indentified if you turn the board back and forth to check the position of the corresponding socket.

Solder the common wire to one of the eight pins on the left-hand connector — the pin chosen determines the keys generated, in the groups shown in Figure 1. For instance, use the fifth pin from the left if you want your joystick to generate the keys in the fifth row of the Figure: 6 and 7 for left and right, 8 and 9 for down and up, and 0 for fire. This arrangement is compatible with many games, including all those which support Interface 2 or user-definable keystrokes. Some early games expect 8 and 9 to be interchanged.

This circuit has an advantage over the Kempston interface: it doesn't interfere with Mode 2 Interrupts — the reason why some games crash if that interface is connected. If this technospeak is a clear as mud to you, have no fear — all will be explained in a future Tech Tip.

When you solder wires to the Spectrum circuit board, coat the end of the wire with a little solder before you bring it into contact with the board — this makes the wire stick much more reliably.

Don't hold the iron against the board for more than a second, or you might do damage. Keep the wire still for a moment after you have taken the iron away, to allow the joint to set firmly — you will see the surface of the solder cloud over as it hardens. Use as little solder a possible; you can always shake it off the iron if there's too much — but mind the cat!

Try to make the joint while the tip of the iron is still smoking. This means that the solder flux, which cleans the area around the joint, has not boiled away.

When you've finished a joint check the surrounding area carefully in case you've splashed some solder somewhere. Make sure that you have not accidentally bridged two points on the board. You can remove solder by cleaning the end of the iron, then dabbing at the offending metal.

Once you've connected the common wire you must solder the other wires from the socket to the back of the right-hand connector. Take care to ensure that the joints or the wires do not touch one another. If you intend to use the Interface 2 keys the wires should be connected in the sequence Left, Right, Down, Up and Fire, from left to right. The pins correspond to the keys in the order shown in *Figure 1*.

All of this sounds difficult, but in practice it only takes a moment, requiring nothing more than concentration and a gentle touch.

SIMON GOODWIN'S SUPERTEST!

When you've soldered the wires in place to your own satisfaction make one last check on your handiwork, and give each wire a gentle tug to make sure that it is firmly held. Tape the wires neatly against the board and put it back into the base of the box. Run the wires out through one of the holes at the back of the computer — I used the gap under the MIC socket.

Screw the board down with the screws you removed earlier, and then prepare to test the interface. It is quite safe to run the computer without the keyboard connected, so long as you are careful that nothing drops into the works. The computer is an ideal test device — you won't even need to type in a listing in order to test the interface comprehensively.

Connect the power and TV lead, but no other add-ons (just in case). The Sinclair copyright message should appear as normal. If anything unexpected happens disconnect the power AT ONCE and re-check your soldering.

As you move the joystick, characters should appear on the screen. Check that the correct values are produced for each direction, and make sure that the Fire button works. ZX BASIC can only detect one keypress at a time, so don't worry if nothing appears when you move the stick in a diagonal direction — this is correct.

If nothing happens at all the common wire is disconnected, either in the computer or at the socket. If unexpected characters appear the common wire is connected to the wrong pin. If all but one of the functions work properly, one of the wires on the five-pin connector or the socket must have come adrift.

If any characters are swapped you must have accidentally transposed the corresponding wires. If a pair of characters don't appear then either two wires have gone astray or — more likely — you have shorted the wires together by using too much solder on the circuit-board or the socket.

RE-ASSEMBLY LANGUAGE

Once you've fully tested the interface, and corrected the faults, you can replace the keyboard and screw your computer back together. Take care when you replace the ribbon cables. Ease them gently into the sockets — very little force is needed if you hold them just above the point where they enter the socket; make sure that they slide in evenly.

Your Spectrum should work perfectly whether or not there is a joystick plugged in. If the keyboard won't work, check that the ribbon cables are undamaged and properly socketed.

In future issues we will bring you a mini-Midi interface and a monitor port, both for little more than the price of the appropriate sockets. If you're computing on a low budget, or you just want to know more about the way your micro works, don't miss TECH TIPS. And remember, if you've got any tips about Spectrum software or hardware, we're waiting to hear from you. Write to:

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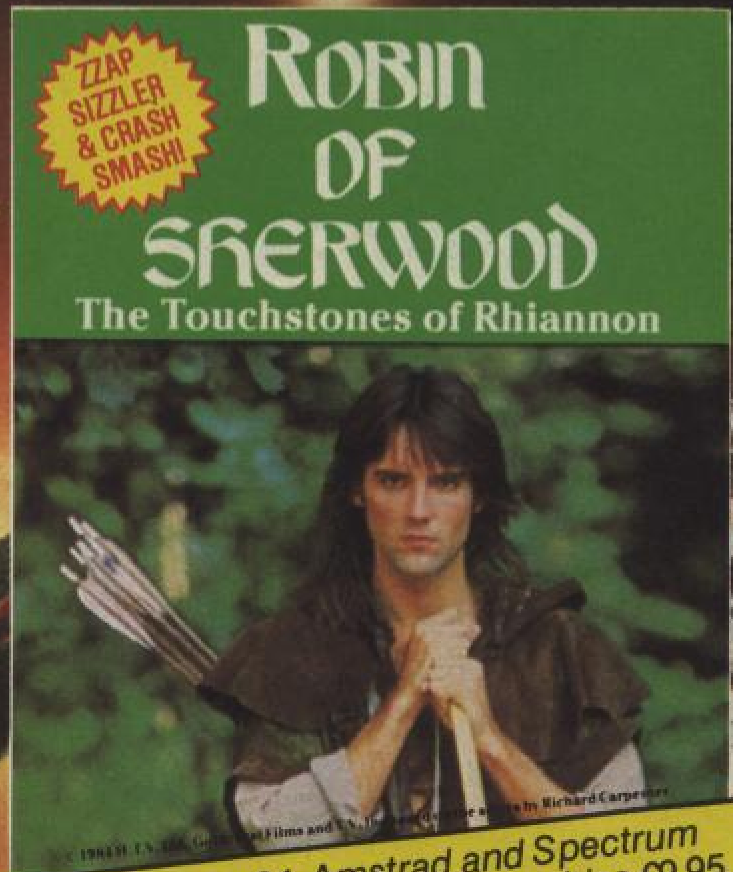


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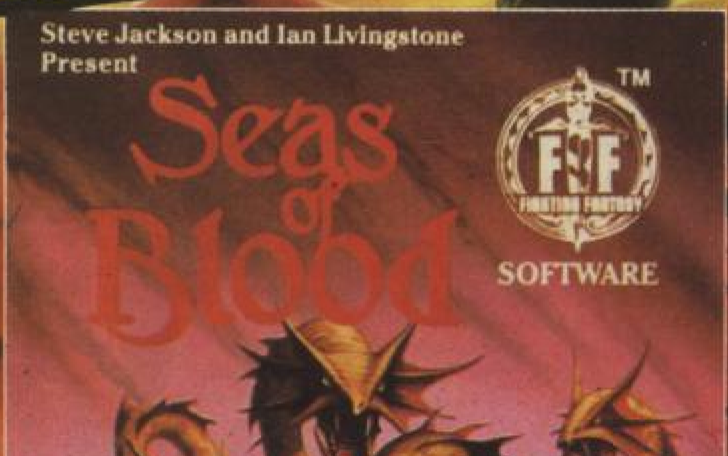
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BLINKING GOOD TIME

I'VE JUST FINISHED reading the last issue of CRASH and in Lloyd's FORUM is a letter suggesting some of the CRASH team have been working too hard. Well in my case perhaps this is true. If you've been with this industry right from the start (and for the sake of argument we'll conveniently draw this particular line at the launch of the Spectrum on mail order only) then you will have seen some changes in software.

In the early days of microcomputer software there was only one real consideration: did the new piece of software take the Spectrum a step further? This was the era of the programmer when everyone looked to the Z80 gurus to lead the loyal flock to a new glorious technological high. Often, games design was complex and intended to be so. Microcomputing was a closetted environment for those who were fed up with watching the likes of Tomorrow's World on TV telling of the future age that never seemed to appear. (Indeed the old joke — 'if it's been on Tomorrow's World you'll never see it' — finally came home to roost). Anyone who really wanted a microcomputer could afford one and had already gone out and bought one. So no matter what the media tried to do or say they were powerless to stop the ground swell of enthusiasm for the new technologies. And herein lies the irony of the whole situation. It was the media which hounded and harangued the public for being so slow on taking up new technology when it was the media and the bureaucratic hierarchy itself which was dragging its feet.

Now the world of microcomputing software is a little different. It is a mass market and has all the risks and responsibilities of any other mass market. A game which pushes the Spectrum to its limits is now not automatically acclaimed but is only judged upon how good a game it is; can a twelve-year-old play it without reading the instructions and if he can, will he notice gameplay slowing at any point due to moving large sprites/vast numbers of sprites etc . . . ? Better to keep all the sprites the same size and pilfer other companies' ideas and routines.

If all the cynicism which has built up in, say, TV and film marketing, now comes to software there won't be a single person over the age of twenty playing games software. And that would be a shame.

Perhaps it's time to take the blinkers off.

A CRASH Smash

TERROR-MOLINOS

Producer: Melbourne House
Price: £7.95
Language: machine code
Authors: Peter Jones & Trevor Lever

Some games are pretty big even before they're released and *Terrormolinos* certainly falls into this category. The authors of this holiday spoof are the very same as those who composed the Quilled classic *Hampstead* which was the first Quilled game to do anything in the charts. I was very pleased at *Hampstead*'s success, not just because I liked it, but for the reason that it tried something new, and a company had the sense to back it at a time when just about every other company was (and to a worrying extent still is) trying to produce the exact same game as its rivals.

The question you must want to ask now is, does *Terrormolinos* keep up the same standards of humour and user-friendliness seen in *Hampstead*? Well, the answer is, yes it does, and in many ways *Terrormolinos* is a far superior program to *Hampstead* — it features some terrific postcard pictures and keeps you in touch with your score, number of turns, and number of pictures successfully developed via a score table at the bottom of the screen. Verily, *Terrormolinos* is a very worthy successor to Hampstead.

You start your holiday, not in the Spanish Costa Brava, but in a semi in Slough one sunny Saturday morning. The wife Beryl has ordered the taxi and it suddenly strikes you it may be a good idea to get some packing done before the taxi arrives. As with all last minute packing you are almost certain to leave something important behind so it may well take you a few attempts to get over the first hurdle and board the plane. There is an added complication at this stage as you must pack your things and get the family off in the taxi to the air-

port within a limited number of moves. Hence you soon learn how to conserve moves and watch the number of moves taken tally at the bottom of the screen (the taxi starts honking its horn about move 35).

It is on the plane you first meet your fellow holidaymakers, a Miss Peach and a Mr Snargsby. Mr Snargsby would seem to have a penchant for intoxicating beverages while Miss Peach doesn't object to having her picture taken; however, others may well object once they see the photo which results. Checking into the hotel is simple enough though its name, The Excrucio, is a little unnerving. Up to this point the adventure is very straightforward with simple problems and a very friendly vocabulary. In Spain itself the program offers more of a challenge as some of the disasters that befall any package holiday make themselves felt. But, all the while, you must keep an eye out for the occasions when a





good photograph might be taken. Usually it is quite obvious when you should take a photograph and you shouldn't run into the problem of running out of exposures too easily (you are given twelve and so to bring back ten snaps you can only make two mistakes).

One thing you'll notice about *Terrormolinos* is its attempts to distance itself from *The Quill* around which it was developed. There are a machine-coded bottom two lines on each screen carrying your score etc, while your input line has no cursor and no beep accompanying input. The input routine is sure-footed, however, and even with no beep or cursor, inputting errors are rare.

There are two features about this game which I think make it a winner. The first is the magnificent sense of humour which runs through the whole program from the 'garishly patterned wallpaper . . . obscured in places by works of art purchased at Boots and Woolworth' and 'your bedroom, scene of many a dull night' in the semi in Slough, to the nightclub in Terrormolinos 'where tourists attempt to emulate John Travolta to the sound of flamenco guitars'. The second is the impressive postcard pictures which either you take as reminders of your trip (and can be reviewed in order at the end of a game — a bit like a slide show) or are seen after a fatal mishap eg after being gored by a bull or burnt to a bacon crisp by the ferocious Spanish sun. These pictures are simple and colourful, like seaside postcards, and I enjoyed them immensely.

Terrormolinos is a superb adventure which will appeal to a very broad audience. It has enough problems to keep the avid adventurer happy, enough humour to counter the winter blues, and picture postcards which are bright enough to colour even a black and white TV set. Above all is its user-friendliness and ease of play — even an adventure novice could quite quickly get to grips with this holiday saga. First it was *Hampstead*, now its the Spanish package holiday which gets the Lever/Jones treatment, and a jolly good job they've done too. *Terrormolinos* is a nice holiday from zapping little green aliens.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy
Graphics: very attractive
Presentation: good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: quick
General rating: super

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	9
Logic	9
Addictive quality	9
Overall	**9**

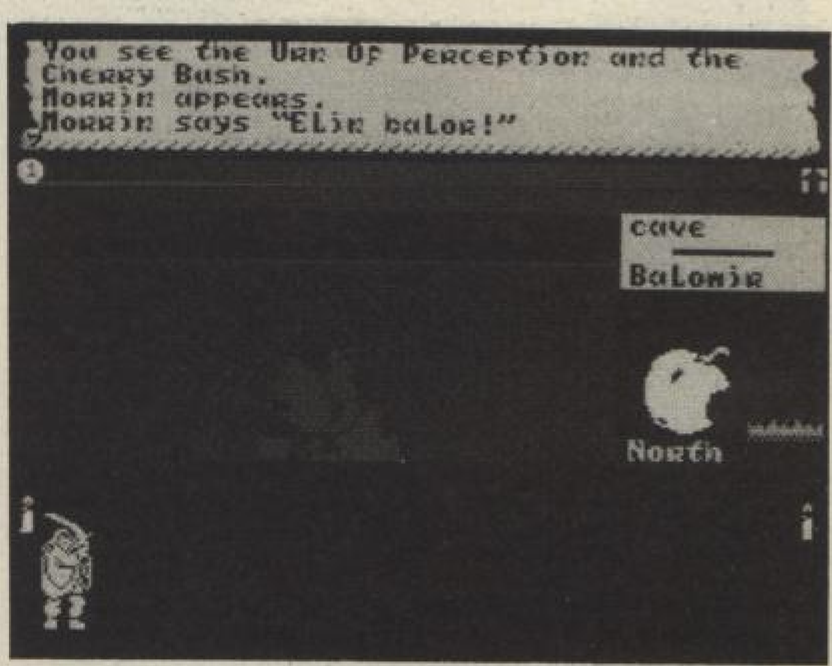
SORDERON'S SHADOW

Producer: **Beyond**
Price: £9.95
Language: machine code
Authors: Nick Eatock & Simon Welland

Sorderon's Shadow describes itself as a new type of adventure game combining landscaping, first seen in Mike Singleton's *Lords of Midnight*, with the ability to input sentences and to talk with other characters. To be more precise, it is the first landscaping text adventure (although *Runestone*, reviewed here in June but yet to be released by Firebird, featured text input and very impressive vistas).

As with the *Midnight* series this game is accompanied by a story within which lie one or two clues to the game's solution. What is a little different about this game, and I must be honest, is not an altogether welcome departure from the norm, is its insistance upon spilling the beans as regards finding your way about the Land of Elindor. You, the un-named one, must tackle the nine tasks set you by Karavor the far-seeing. These tasks appear toward the end of the now familiar Beyond glossy booklet, just after the map of the Land of Elindor, and at a point when all the instructions seemed to augur well for a fine adventure game.

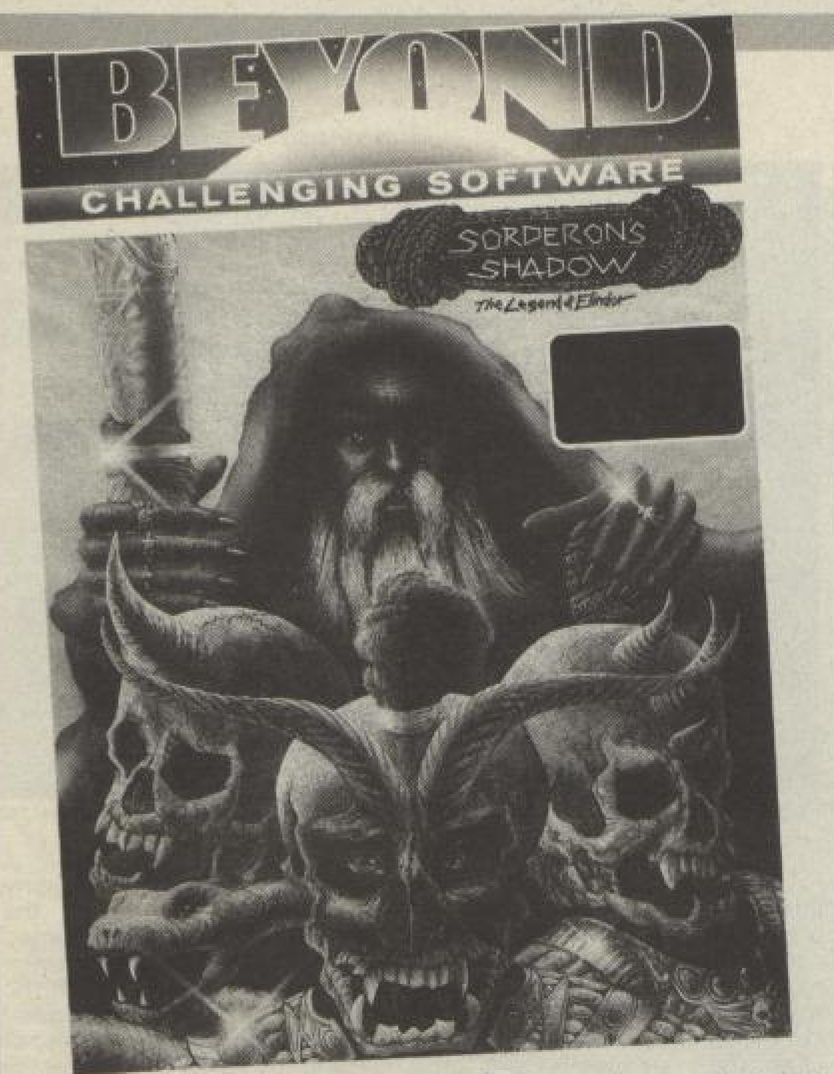
However, loading the game coincided with my reading these nine tasks and I began to become just that bit circumspect as I began play. The point is (and there seems little reason to beat around the bush any longer) these nine tasks take you stage by stage through the whole adventure, right up to the assault on Sorderon's Lair and to the Scroll of Immortality which bears the words that spell Sorderon's doom. You might ask, what's so wrong with that? Well, the impression it gives me is that this

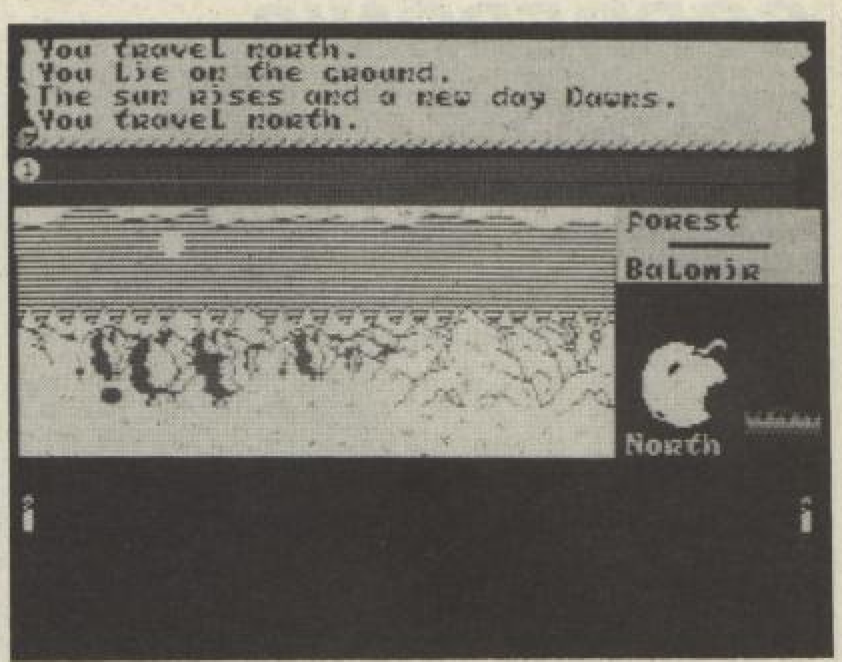


information was deemed essential as the game is so difficult to play, that without it play would have been impossible. Of course, first impressions can be misleading, but in this case playing the adventure only served to strengthen my reservations on this game rather than banish them.

Let's have a look at the story. Out of the east came a surly hedge-wizard going by the name of Sorderon. He teamed up with another no-good named Caradach the Watcher with the intention of turning the good king Ba. When Sorderon tired of feeding the king lies he slew the sleeping king and stole away into the night with the fabled scroll of Dorian, a key to immor-







tality. Having learned the scroll's secrets he lodged the scroll in forgotten Baramund. Not being one to forget old friends, Sorderon decided to call on Caradach and unceremoniously slew him. No one was safe now. Of lords he made Kremen and soldiers, Krillan. Lord Plavor escaped to his shelter beyond the lava lakes to the north while Karavor and Aravor hid in the forest of Balinor. Needless to say, in Elindor the fields fell barren and men wept for good king Ba. All who were free awaited the coming of the un-named one.

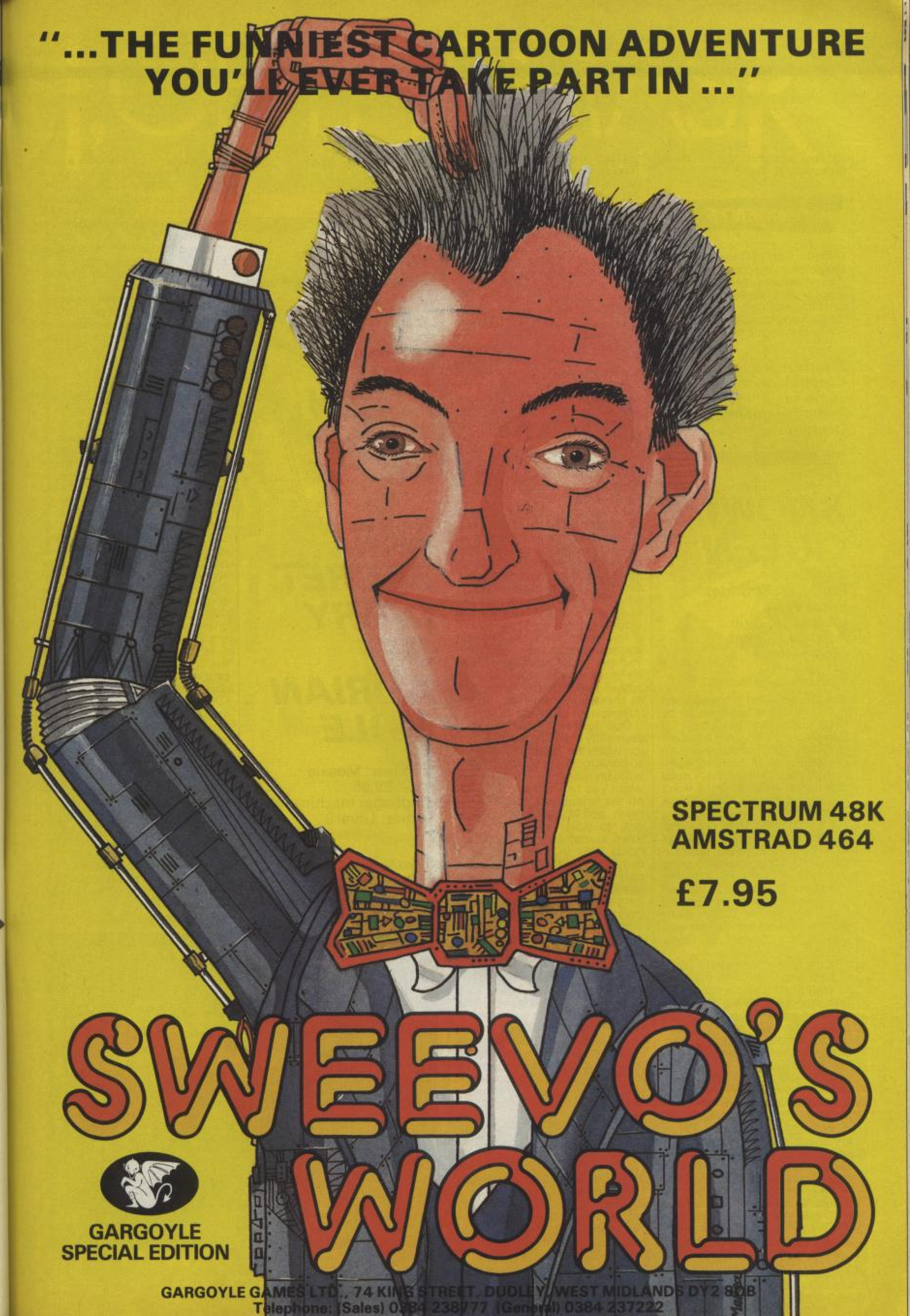
You'll see what I mean about being lead by the nose through this adventure by telling you about what you have to do first. 'As you awake in Elindor a guide will go before you. Follow him north, stay close and pay heed to his words'. The guide then goes on 'Bear greetings to the headman. Shirk not the task he sets you', and on: 'Summon the Balord with Lonar's help'. Now, I don't know about you, but I find part of the fun in adventuring, especially landscaped adventuring, is to wander freely about the environs and discover for myself what I have to do and in what order I might have to do it. It spoils the fun somewhat, and indeed makes it something of a school exercise, to be hounded into following a set path of puzzles in this manner.

Now, before you get the impression this review is no more than a vicious assault on a game which has had tremendous reviews in other magazines, let me say now that this game is graphically stunning with some great art and design work by the Denton Designs team. Time is a major theme of the game with real time character movements going on all the while. During the day a bright sun burns across the sky in realistic procession while at night it is the moon which transcends the heavens. Flames flicker atop candles burning to either side of the display area which houses the characters in your present location. A drop of something which looks like blood constantly drips down to form a skull rising above flames. When the skull is clear of the flames it is night and the krillan zombie warriors are abroad.

Through the landscaping window can be seen stunning vistas of Elindor, too cluttered to be quite as impressive or effective as those in *Midnight*, but entertaining enough. In the landscapes can be seen hillocks, trees and distant mountains with drifting clouds above. Representations of characters can be seen some distance ahead. However, these figures are much cruder than those superb drawings seen in *Midnight*. Some compensation lies in the graphics below the landscape window which depict the characters in your location in true Denton Design style.

The game has not just gone for stunning graphics though, it has also tackled the thorny problem of vocabulary. A 3 line editor allows the manipulation of three stored input commands which can be summoned and subsequently altered. Any word not understood by the program is clearly pointed out in the error message slot.

The apparently finished copy of *Sorderon's Shadow* sent to me was, to be honest, somewhat of a disappointment. Some of the keys did not function as the manual (or keyboard aid) suggested, and many of the abbreviations mentioned were not accepted by the program. These minor niggles, sadly, were symptomatic of a deeper flaw to this game: its play design has not worked out so well and it can take a considerable effort at times to muster sufficient will to carry on. What the game can offer is good graphics and a stiff challenge to any adventurer. It's early days yet but how much


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money on this game being compared to *Valhalla*?

COMMENTS

Difficulty: difficult to get into
Graphics: rather good
Presentation: superb
Input facility: sentences, command store
Response: reasonable
General rating: a biggie

Atmosphere	8
Vocabulary	7
Logic	7
Addictive quality	6
Overall	7

SNOW QUEEN

Producer: St Brides
Price: £t.b.a.
Language: Quill
Authors: Games Mistresses

The Snow Queen is based upon the work of the same name by Hans Christian Andersen, a Danish chap who lived between 1805 and 1875 and was quite something when it came to spinning a yarn or two. (If that's not a popularist introduction, I don't know what is). His other works which became famous are the Tin Soldier and Ugly Duckling. Software has pilfered the ideas of comics, TV, films and books in the past but this attempt to bring the flavour of the book to the computer program has worked quite well — much as *Tangled Tale* from Pocket Money Software reviewed last month was true to the flavour of Lewis Carrol.

In the *Snow Queen* your job is to help Gerda through her long journey and many adventures to find her lost friend Kay, ensconced within the palace of the queen. We are told of how Gerda, a little Danish girl, can only comprehend simple English like GO EAST and LOOK UNDER THE CHAIR. The game follows the story very closely so it's a good idea to have the relevant part of the story (chapter III) close by while you play. There are also many events which are an addition to the story, little things which happened to Gerda which were never written down.

There are quite a number of things about this game which are truly pleasing to a weary adventure reviewer. First, there's its friendly vocabulary. If you are new to adventuring (and if you are a column regular you'll notice I've been putting the odd explanation in for just this sort recently) then 'friendly vocabulary' refers to the fact that one can expect to approach this game with a keen sense of fun rather than trepidation as much more often than not the program will understand the first thing you input (even if, for reasons of plot or logistics, it cannot carry out your request). In a friendly game you are often told why you can't do something or that you are attempting some action too soon, before acquiring the necessary tools for the job. The adventures I like best are those which have a fresh reply to anything you might like to input.

Secondly, the useful EXAMINE command, as is often the case in a friendly game, adds much to your feeling of genuine exploration. Thirdly, the location descriptions are never terse or abrupt and are always well written and mostly informative. Take this one for example:- "I am in a town street. Our house is north, the street runs east/west. Across the road, to the south, is a narrow alley. The town is just coming to life. The bakers are at work, the cocks are crowing and a few early risers are opening the shutters at their windows. The aroma of fresh-baked bread wafts on the breeze. Can you advise me?" Descriptions such as these add immensely to the atmosphere of adventuring.

One further feature which I especially liked is the odd occasion when the program has been so constructed as to deliberately build up suspense. For example, when you tackle the rough girls on the bridge just south of the town, and it looks like the only way to pass them is to offer them something, the program holds you in suspense as it comes out with "Oh, but it is the only thing I have to remind me of Mama". What then seems like a long time, but of course really isn't, passes before "But you are right. It must be done. The girls have snatched the gift and run away to town" comes up onto the screen to tell you that what you chose to do was indeed right.

The Snow Queen is the follow up to the *St. Bride's* school romp reviewed in the October Trail. It is a text-only Quilled game which makes very good use of the Gilsoft programming utility. It is atmospheric and consistent and I really quite enjoyed playing it.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy as it mostly follows book by H C Andersen
Graphics: none
Presentation: pleasant
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: instant
General Rating: most interesting

Atmosphere	8
Vocabulary	8
Logic	7
Addictive quality	7
Overall	7

A CRASH Smash

THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE

Producer: Mosaic
Price: £9.95
Language: machine code
Author: Level 9

Adrian Mole the computer game is a super implementation of the highly successful and very funny diary books written by Sue Townsend. Playing the game takes you through a year in the fascinating life of Adrian Mole, a worried spotty adolescent, frustrated intellectual and poet. He has to contend with the rocky marriage of his parents, the insensitivity of his school mates and teachers, and bits of him that won't keep still.

The problems of human existence take up much of his time but diversions lie in his relationships with a fourteen-year-old feminist named Pandora who sits next to him in geography, and an eighty nine-year-old man whom he visits with the good samaritan group from his school. He is dogged by ill-health and ill-healthed by his dog.

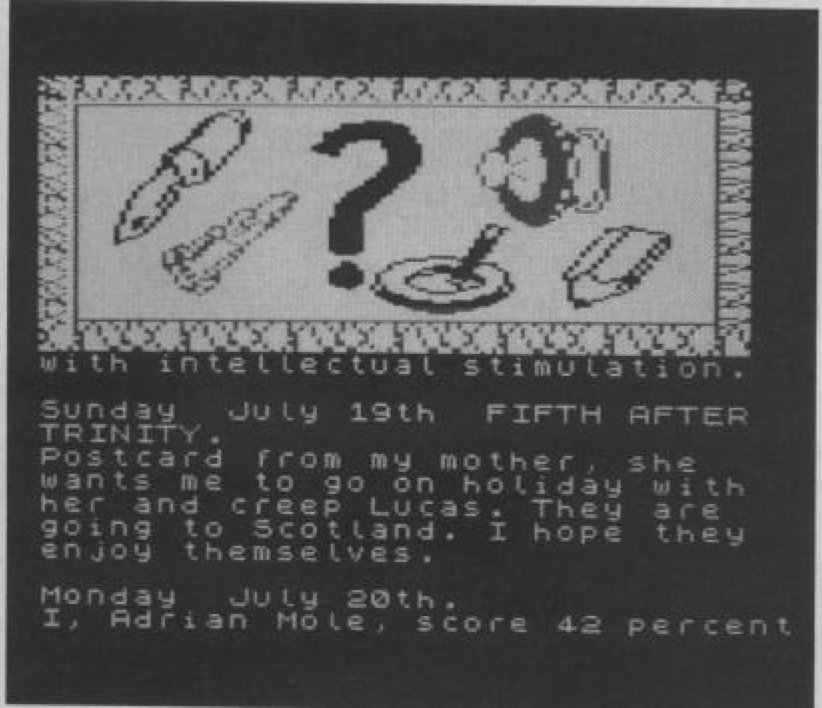
The aim of the game is to make our adopted hero as popular as possible with everyone — family, friends and dog. Every so often during the game your score appears on the screen with the likes of 38% indicating a middling thicko and 26% a spotty creep. The results of some actions may not be immediately obvious, for example, being too neat and tidy may arouse his mother's guilt feelings. A number of random elements alter your course through the troubled path of adolescence and so play may vary each time you load up.

To any person who has read the Adrian Mole books, the program can still offer some challenges as some familiar scenes have a new twist. The game consists of a number of separate programs with the first two programs on Side One and the remaining two on Side Two. Each program covers a few months of Adrian's life.

This game is not your usual adventure. The flow of text is much more like a book with the player only being asked to alter the course of events via a choice between one of three options. The fourth option, so easy to forget, displays a help menu which includes a service you would be wise to make use of early on: simply typing in the name of a



I, OF THE MASK · I, OF THE MASK · I, OF THE MASK · I, OF THE MASK

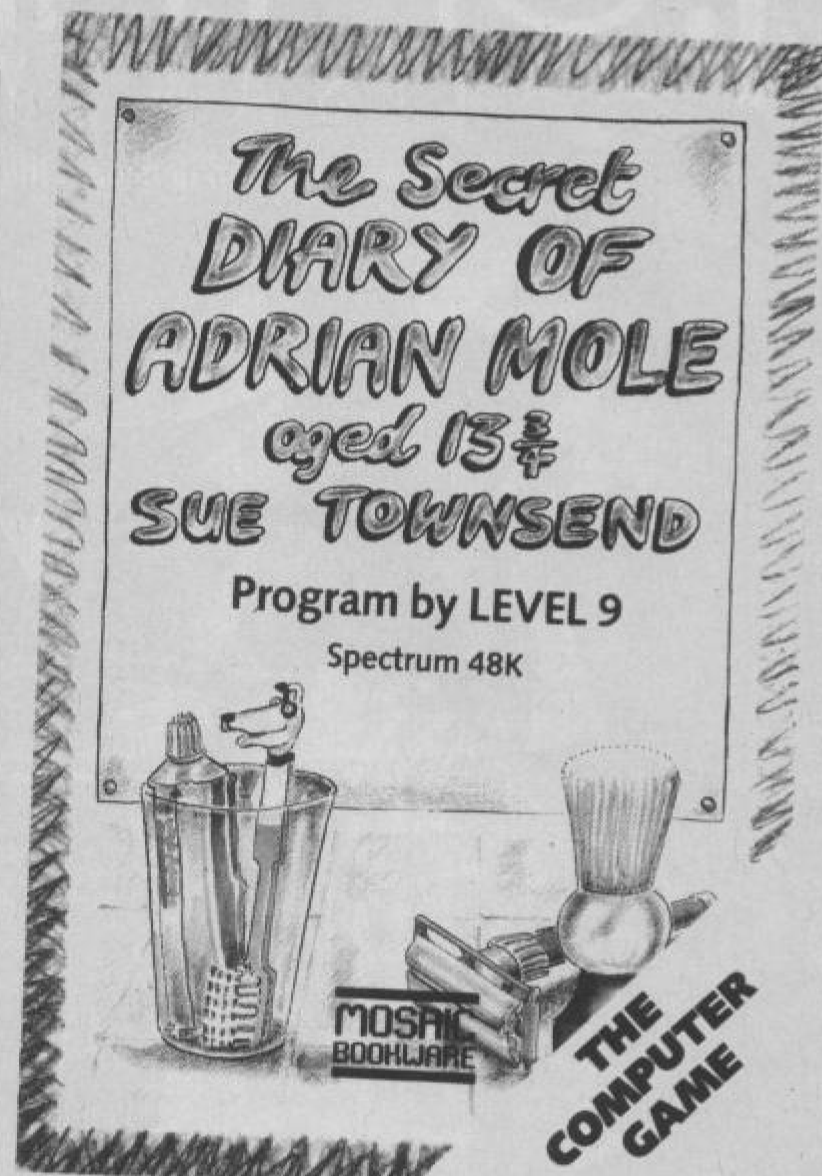


character from the diary will bring up onto the screen a fact-file on that character in true Star Trek computer style. Features such as this, plus options such as RESTART and DEMO, really give this game a classy feel.

The cassette inlay speaks of an illustrated text game and this is very much what it is, as the pictures above the scrolling text do not show every new location, rather an abstract interpretation of the types of things running through our young hero's mind. They are of similar style and frequency as those found in illustrated paperback books. As is often the case with such illustrations decorating a copious and highly absorbing text, you may well play most of the game without recalling one single picture.

If you haven't read the Mole diaries, or seen the recent ITV television series (partly spoiled by the typecast parents) then you are in for a treat. Although the series stars a pubescent fourteen-year-old it is in fact universally funny. It, in a manner of speaking, chronicles the demise of civilisation through the miscomprehending eyes of a young budding intellectual. The idea that the world is running down is not a new one and must be pretty obvious to anyone gullible enough to have been harangued into buying a TV licence by those ridiculous BBC adverts. The fact that the Mole books soothe with laughter our institutionalised paranoia is nothing new. What the books, and this computer program, do bring out afresh through some very subtle writing is an atmosphere where even the most blinkered half cretin can see just what is so patently ludicrous about the life-styles and mores being forced upon us by the advertising media (television and the Sunday Times etc).

At one point in the program, after doing his own washing, Mole wonders why his mum can't be like those washday housewives on the telly. At another point he thinks of War and Peace as a Russian Dallas. I could go on with many examples but suffice to say that Adrian Mole is a tonic for so



much of the nonsense behind our society's decline into an uncaring and ludicrous bureaucracy. He is a likeable and very human person at a time when just about every character depicted in films, books and on television, is so uncaring, unashamedly self-motivated, and inhuman.

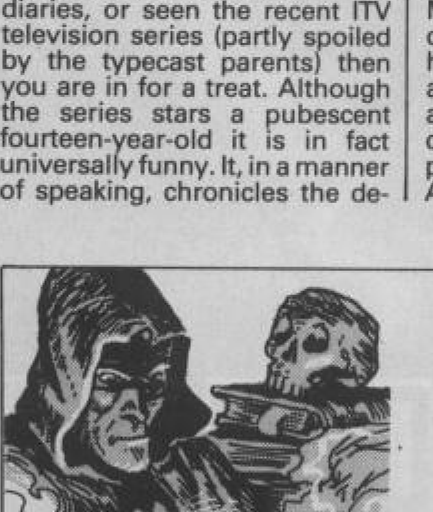
We join Mole's diary on the first day of the year where he enters his new year resolutions which include hanging trousers up, a stop to squeezing spots, and, after hearing the disgusting noises from downstairs the previous night, a vow never to drink alcohol. The next few months see Mole observing a Mr Lucas, the next door neighbour, serving up a cup of tea while Mrs Lucas concretes the front of the house, sending a poem entitled 'The Tap' to the BBC, and a rebellious phase were both he and Pandora wear red socks to school. The story is peppered with humorous comments on modern life at the end of a cul-de-sac. At one point he comments on his ill-health and wonders at the amount of boil-in-the-bag food the family has eaten. His red spots could be an allergic reaction to plastic.

The idyllic lazy life of a schoolboy is far from our young hero as he has to come to terms with a mother fresh from assertiveness training who has him cleaning the whole house, and a fusty old codger called Bert Baxter who smokes, drinks brown ale and keeps a ferocious alsatian but who can't have long to live as he is older than Ronald Reagan. But when life's frustrations and inconsistencies become too much there's always that intellectual medium which is the home of all great writers— the poem. I'll leave you with this one concerning Adrian's English teacher's transportation. *Dock Leaf's got a Fiat, Covered in red rust, Its paint is blue, Its smoke is too, The wing mirrors are bust, Dock Leaf's in his banger, Bouncing down the lane, The engine coughs, Exhaust falls off, And then it stops again.*

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy to play
Graphics: abstract
Presentation: good
Input facility: one of four options
Response: very fast
General rating: Mole is brilliant, and so is this game. Find somewhere that sells it, before we all go insane

Atmosphere	**9**
Logic	**9**
Addictive quality	**9**
Overall	**9**



ADVENTURE TRAIL REVIEW RATINGS

ATMOSPHERE: reflects quality of location description and graphics and how credibly characters behave.

VOCABULARY: the completeness of the vocabulary and friendliness of response. All words and associated words (objects etc) in location descriptions should be included.

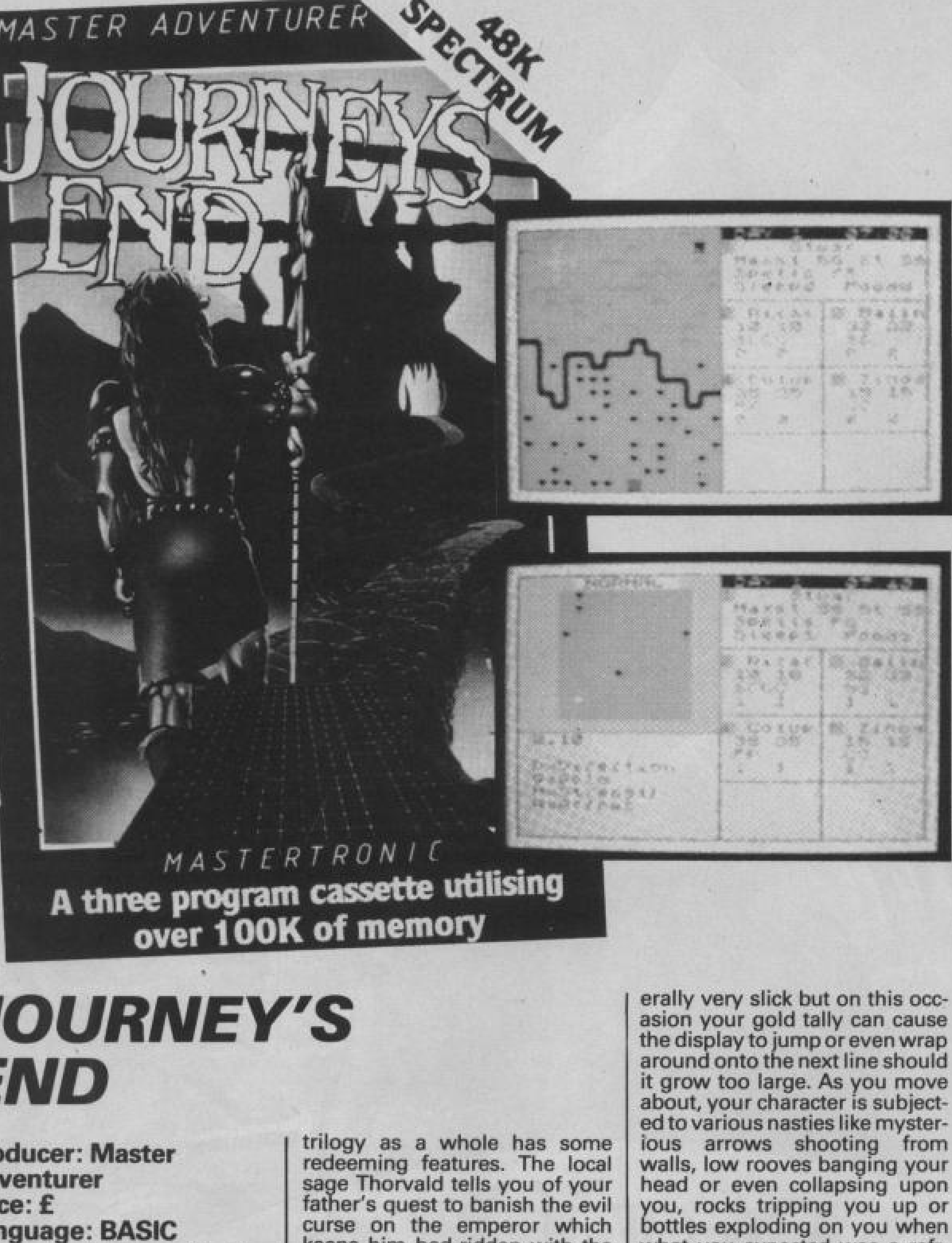
LOGIC: reflects the logic of the problems encountered and whether or not you are likely to be killed without warning or chance of escape.

DEBUGGING: indicates the level of crashproofing. A program should not be crashed simply by making an incorrect entry or by pressing an unfortunate combination of keys.

OVERALL: general rating based on price and the other ratings BUT NOT AN AVERAGE OF THE OTHER RATINGS.


LORD OF THE RINGS
GAME ONE
AT LAST! The eagerly awaited sequel to the fabulous classic "The Hobbit" is now available. "The Hobbit", classed as 'the ultimate adventure game of all time', was just a taste of what you can expect in LORD OF THE RINGS.
Astonishing vocabulary, graphics and more locations than you could imagine possible!
LORD OF THE RINGS Game 1 is available on C64, BBC, Spectrum and Amstrad at £15.95. This stunning package includes two cassettes, large booklet and a copy of "The Lord of the Rings" Part 1.
MELBOURNE HOUSE





JOURNEY'S END

Producer: Master Adventurer
Price: £
Language: BASIC
Authors: M Prescott, C Gonsalves, T Everson

Journey's End describes itself as a Sword and Sorcery adventure but is probably better described as a hotch-potch of three mini-games strung together. In Part One you move your character around a dungeon in what amounts to a poor man's version of *Out of the Shadows*, with your lantern lighting the way before you. I say 'poor man's' because the lighting effects are crude when compared to *Shadows* and the feel of the game is not as air-tight with points lost and gained willy-nilly.

Part Two sees you and your party travelling up a map searching for a way across the river you meet half way up it. Part Three has you roaming the corridors and chambers of a castle. The poor quality of the first game is a shame since the trilogy as a whole has some redeeming features. The local sage Thorvald tells you of your father's quest to banish the evil curse on the emperor which keeps him bed-ridden with the hell-fever. The object of his quest was the Elixir of Hagar the Demonic, an elixir named after the scoundrel who set the curse upon the emperor. Part One sees you continue your father's quest from a dungeon on the edge of the empire.

Part One is a rather poor game where the cursor keys are used to propel your little character around a dungeon lighted around you by your lamp. Presumably, as you make your way, you fix lights to the walls, as once lit any part of the dungeon you have visited remains lit. There are two parameters by which you can judge your progress. At the top of the screen you are kept informed on the tally of gold pieces you possess (found scattered around in money bags, in the form of gems, or as gold dust in bottles) while next to this is the state of your character's strength.

The standard of presentation throughout these games is generally very slick but on this occasion your gold tally can cause the display to jump or even wrap around onto the next line should it grow too large. As you move about, your character is subjected to various nasties like mysterious arrows shooting from walls, low rooves banging your head or even collapsing upon you, rocks tripping you up or bottles exploding on you when what you expected was a refreshing drink. Some of these fates may not sound too horrific but when you consider that each represents a significant loss in strength points, and a score of 0 means death, then you feel each and every blow that comes your way. In addition, opening doors before you have found the key for that level's doors requires strength and so you may well consider it unwise to open any doors before finding the all-important key (this key also allows you to leave the level and teleport to another).

The over-riding factor with this first part of the adventure is luck rather than skill. Where you might bang your head, or whether a bottle you open contains a healing potion or poison is totally arbitrary. Thus the game reduces to no more than keeping a cursor key depressed until progress is barred by some report or other. There is literally no skill which you can bring to bear on the game. You leave this part by way of a genie from a bottle offering freedom or by way of steps chosen randomly from a level. If, like myself, you tire quickly of this first part you'd be wise not to refuse the genie's kind offer (indeed, I can see many of you reading this review simply in order to work out just how you do escape this wretched part of the adventure).

If you survive Part One which, considering the pitfalls just waiting to decimate your meagre strength points, is no easy matter, you then must advertise and then select the best mercenaries to take with you into Part Two. One diversion at this stage is the Gambling Option which allows you to gamble some of your gold coins on a curious selection of rodent race meetings with names like The Ratokill Classic or some such other humorous titles. There is more humour when changing from one part to another when Arfin Goldbeard says 'There is one thing you must do to continue your quest'. 'What is that?' you ask. 'Press any key and start the tape' Arnfin replies. Part Two of this game has some very noble features whereby the six characters you've chosen to accompany you on your mission search for food and attack the enemies you meet in rather impressive combat routines.

Journey's End is the type of adventure where progress through the various terrains is achieved by pressing a cursor key. It consists of three parts which are linked by a transfer of gold, strength and members of your party which you select from advertising paid from the proceeds of your booty or gambling. Part One is very arbitrary with no skill involved, Part Two slightly less so as you do need to take care over your route through the landscape, whom within your party you choose to fight in the front line, and which members of your party should reap the benefits of any food found. Sleep will conserve strength but two men must guard the party.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: tricky in places
Graphics: good in places
Presentation: good (in places)
Input Facility: cursor key movement and number options
Response: yes
General rating: Part One — very poor. The rest is quite interesting

Atmosphere	6
Vocabulary	n/a
Logic	6
Addictive Quality	6
Overall	**6**


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(DE) PRESSING FREEDOM

Dear Brewster
What on earth is the point of having a code? The only reason for codes is to stop the wrong people from knowing your messages. This is pointless as you print the code in Signpost anyway! (??—***DB***) The only personages (another of Lloyd's long words) who you might want to shut out are C64 owners, but they are indulged in ZZAP! (the ones that can read that is!).

Anyway, onto the good stuff (great I hear you cry!). In Red Moon — oh, by the way (oh dear, another lecture) — up till now I thought Level 9 were it, the supreme adventure company, but oh no, not any more. How could Red Moon be a CRASH Smash? The graphics on the prototype 0.1 Oric are better. The game is a humiliation to the Spectrum.

Well now (phew, at last, some tips). The lamp is obviously needed in dark places. Search the first location to get a valued object, and get the gloves and dagger. You could say the gloves are cool but the dagger is used when things get decidedly hot. To get through the small door eat a breakfast delicacy. I'm sure the tube, from the tube room, and the gas mask are for down the well, but I can't work it out, yet! Don't wear the armour except in battle, it takes off strength. Don't fight when you are small as you only have 5 hit points. Casting spells is impeded by iron and you will loose 7 hit points.

By the way, I have taken Red Moon back as I don't like it. Level 9, it's your own downfall! Same to you! (I think he's referring to my here! —***DB***). I've written to Signpost 7 times and I've never won, not even got published, so PLEASE!

A Taylor, New Malden, Surrey
(with ***DB*** additions and licence)

If the start of this letter is anything to go by I'm not surprised at you not having any of your letters published. It makes about as much sense as a Tax Return form. Without wanting to preclude a thorough Career Analysis I'd say you'd make a great lawyer — you can turn logic on its head and back again.

As for ZZAP!, well, a magazine is only as good as its subject and the truth is the C64 has always been overshadowed by the Spectrum for reasons which say a lot about the intelligence of the micro market (compare this intelligence to the mess which accompanied video recorders — a simple enough market split asunder by wrangling and problems of compatability).

As for Level 9, they are one of the most commercial companies dealing with adventures and I would say they've got the balance between thorough plot and interesting graphics about right: the abstract graphics allow the player some imaginative leeway. If taking software back to shops solely on grounds of taste were feasible (which, as far as I know, it is not) then I could think of many other games I would take back before Level 9's.

DB

CONSUMER ADVICE

Dear Derek
On the 16th of September, a day after my birthday, I decided to treat myself with what money I had left. I bought Red Moon in the hope that it was the best adventure on the market. Was it? You bet your bottom dollar it WASN'T; atmosphere, vocabulary and logic overrated. Consequently so were addictive quality and value. Any puzzles that show themselves are either quickly solved, never solved or divert you from the path of the game's completion.

You say in the review that the giant rat comes back as a ghost. You must have played for a very short period of time before you wrote the review. I have been attacked by ghosts of the grasper, the giant, the statue and the vampire.

The game claims that you cannot save in the presence of a living being. I don't know how a ghost or a vampire can be a living being.

I cannot help but compare it with Lords of Time which costs a third more and lasts ten times longer interest wise. I have completed the game with about 585 points and used only two lives in the process.

I assume that others will like Red Moon — somebody from C&VG loved it. I almost feel entitled to a refund so I would like to swap with any of the Level 9 originals.

Milan Petrovich, Birmingham

Even though these first two letters deal with the same sort of gripe, I thought I'd answer both separately. The truth is only avid adventurers will take the trouble to write to SIGNPOST and so you might expect an inherent bias in the views expressed in this mail towards the early Level 9 games which had no graphics but where superbly crafted. This was all way back in the halcyon days when computers appeared attractive to those who wanted to use their noggins for something a bit more interactive than TV (which, as it happens, was just itself giving in to commercial pressure and hitting an all-time low).

Now microcomputer games form a mass market whether you like it or not. In a mass market, brains go out of the window to be replaced by profit margins, turnover and expected increase in sales. It's not just computer games which are subject to market forces, entertainments such as going to see a film at a cinema have declined to the point where poor old Barry Norman is trapped into a resigned monotone, such is the absolute drivel served up in cinemas these days. Turn any commodity over to MASS market forces and you will see a decline in quality although you will see a marked improvement in the shallower, more superficial trappings. The decline in films, TV and microcomputer games for the cause of chasing mass markets is a microcosm of the decline in our very civilisation itself. So there.

DB

A FRESHER FINDS THE TRAIL

Dear Derek,
I thought I must write and congratulate you on Adventure Trail and Signpost. Being a new reader to CRASH magazine I have splashed out money on adventures thanks to you Derek. I thought when I bought CRASH you were on to a winner. Being a reader of another magazine, I have now given it up for CRASH. It is hard to find reviews on adventures or tips to help me. I like my adventures to have graphics but I think Level 9 software is fantastic with good input and good plots. The next game I am going to splash out on is Red Moon because with your review and because it's by Level 9. I might also splash out on Terrormolinos but I will wait for your review. Keep up the good work.

Steven Hunter, Welton, Nr Lincoln

I know the problem with other magazines. I got so fed up I thought I'd write myself.

DB

LONG, SHORT AND TALL STORIES

Dear Mr Brewster,
I read with interest the letter in Issue 20 by Wayne Morledge who suggested, among other things, that you include 'Number of Locations' in your reviews. I quite agree, but because it requires you to complete a game, you could instead include 'Size' which would give the approximate size, based upon an average. So say 50 to 100 locations is average, below 50 is small to fairly small, and above 100 is quite big to monstrous. I think size is one of the most important aspects of an adventure.

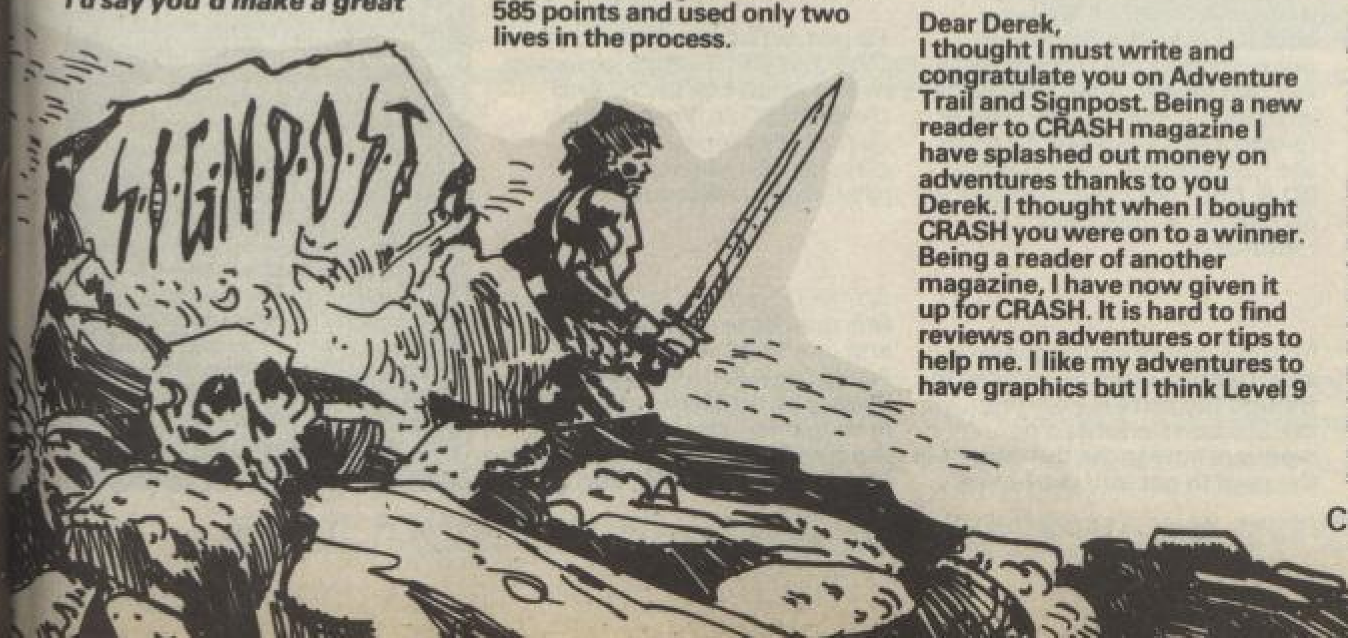
Adrian O'Sullivan, Chiswick, London

Adventuring is a very subtle pastime and it's easy for a reviewer to stomp around without quite picking up all a game's refinements or artful ambience. The number of locations, while not quite being irrelevant so long as adventures retain roughly the same format, could be misleading as some adventures may be constructed to pack as much detail and happening into each and every location. Sherlock ***is one example (but a surprising one in that it also has a remarkable number of locations).***

DB

VERY NICE, BUT WHAT IS IT?

Dear Derek,
I was prompted to write after reading PERFECTLY PERFECT in the September Signpost regarding adventure maps. I also think you should push for more room in your column and print a couple of maps (yes a couple) each month (yes each month). Just location maps — no object locations or problem solutions should be included



and maps should be adventure planner format, no offence to the great Oli but we all can't draw like Oli but we can all use an adventure planner.

At two maps per month it would take twelve issues to cover the current adventure chart (ah! twice twelve is twenty four, you say, what about the other six games in the chart?) Well, this is my second point in writing. There are six games which appear in both charts, namely: Dun Darach, Shadow Fire, Dragon Torc, Lords of Midnight, Tir Na Nog, Doomdark's Revenge. Isn't it about time someone on CRASH made their mind up, what is a game, and what is an adventure?

If no-one can make this trivial decision then put it in a questionnaire or even have another top ten for these games. I think an adventure should be classified in some way. Perhaps 1. Require text input 2. Cannot be played with a joystick 3. Text location descriptions (even adventures with graphics have this). May I add that I enjoy playing the above six games but I do not class them as adventures. What do you or other readers think?

Michael Titley, Doncaster.

Who said I would never stoop so low as to pedal my own self interest and publish some petty politics (fair rights for DB, lots more room and lots more lolly!!). As for your second point I will not discourse at length but reveal some northern bluntness: Lords of Midnight ***is an adventure because everything about it is in keeping with the genre (storyline, atmosphere, use of grey matter etc). And as for the disagreements within CRASH this may partly be explained by the fact that I reside in The Far North which is nowhere near CRASH Towers in the Middlemass — hence the lack of communication on subtle issues. Also, classification is a very boring topic, whether it be in zoology or music, and if I were you I would leave such matters to the academic world where such fundamentally boring subjects take on a whole new perspective (more especially in the union bar).***

DB

And now for the bit where I try and help you out of a quandry only to leave you more puzzled than you were to start with. Yes, it's SIGNSTUMPS. So let's see what's got you stumped this month.

Ian Harrison from Llandudno writes 'I have bought Robin of Sherwood which is an excellent game. How do you stop yourself getting killed in Simon Bellemes castle? What do you do at the archery tournament? Where do I get 400 gold pieces or the stolen Holy Crest? How do you rob the tax collector? How do you get Friar Tuck to join you?'
In The Hobbit he asks how to get home from the dragon's lair after getting the treasure.

To stop yourself getting killed at the castle you must LJMM Belleme with the TJMWFS BSSPX. To get the TJMWFS BSSPX you shoot the target at the BSDIFSZ UPVSOBNFOU. To get 100 of your 400 gold pieces examine the TUBUVF'T FZFT. In The Hobbit ***try this:- S,S,S,D,S. If wood elf captures you go back and follow instructions. If elf is at waterfall then LJMM him with the TXPSE and move into the forest.***

William Woodvine of Telford says 'after reading the review of Red Moon, I bought it. I have nothing but praise for this fantastic adventure. After one week of playing I have nothing to ask except how do you get past the dog and what is sog the newtling for?'

To take care of the dog put the QJMMT in the NFBU and then give it to the XBUDI EPH. The newtling is NPTUMZ IBSNMFTT.

James Clifford in Glasgow asks could you please tell me where and how to get the woman's beard and how to get the objects from the bird on top of the hill in Eric the Viking by Mosaic?'

To get the woman's beard you need DMJQQFST, DBOEMF and IFMNFU. Then shave the dwarf. At the eagle's nest drop the TQJUPPO and the bird will spit into the TQJUPPO. I must thank David Russell ***of Aberdeen for these tips on*** Eric the Viking.

Matthew Hook of Bromsgrove now answers a query set in the September issue of CRASH. He writes 'Philip Fleming asked for help with Subsunk, and you couldn't help him. Well here goes. To open the safe you need the two pieces of NBQ stuck with HMVF, the TUFUIPTDPQF (worn) and a keen ear! To open the rusted hatch you need the BDJE CBUUFSZ and then spill it on the hatch (good rust remover).

Martin Coyle in Nottingham is still trying to crack Eureka! even though the prize is now won. In the Modern Caribbean he wonders how to get the thing in the pool to get into the house.

Throw the DBSDBTT of the QBOUIFS into the QPPM and get the NFUBM TUSJQ to use on the window.

R. O'Caollai in Dublin is struggling with his alcohol problem in Mafia Contract. He asks could you please tell me how to find some booze?'

Give QBQFS to USBNQ and drink NFUIT. This tip was kindly supplied by Ian King ***in Tipton.***

Paul Ashley from Croydon struggles with a common problem in The Hulk. 'Please, please, please help me with Hulk. Whenever I say get ants they pull out my eyes. David Burnett of Craigavon is having the same sort of problems, 'How do I persuade the ants to follow me because GET ANTS does not work'. Nick Crutchley of Walsall asks 'How do you store the bio-gem without it walking away or the ants eating it? A. Boschmans in Belgium is having one or two problems with The Hulk. Among other things he wonders about the use of the wax and the gas outlet.

To rescue ant-man IPME OPTF, DMPTF NPVUI and QMVH ears with XBY. Go to ants. DMPTF FZFT and get ants. Take ants to Ultron. To deal with the bio-gem problem MFBWF the gem in its room until all gems have been collected. The wax is used to QMVH the ears and the gas outlet.

Steven Trow is having trouble in Fantasia Diamond. 'I can't open the musical door even with the baton. What do I have to do?'
To open the musical door the conductor needs the CBUPO, the violinist the WJPMJO, and the green book contains the NVTJD. The command then is 'say to conductor play music.'

Brian Morrison in East Lothian wonders how to defeat Mysterio and the Ringmaster in Adventure International's Spiderman (he already knows how to see off Hydro-man).

To get rid of the Ringmaster, DMPTF FZFT before entering room, push the LOPC and then UVSO it. You do not defeat Mysterio, the one outside the skyscraper is probably an illusion.

Adrian O'Sullivan has sent me a few queries regarding Kentilla and one to do with Golden Apple from Artic. He writes 'Please oh masterful one, tell me how to open and get through the trapdoor without a demonic idol slicing me in half, and while I'm at it, what does the glowing crystal do and where do I get the graphite for the Fire Protection spell?'

You need the JSPO SPE from the floor of the USPMMT lair. To find it examine floor. JOTFSU SPE into statue. The glowing crystal can be used as a weapon against the USPMM. To get graphite, examine UBMJTNBO. Remove diamonds with TXPSE and then CVSO diamonds in GVSOBDF. In Golden Apple ***feed the crocodile with the TBMNPO.***

Alex Jameson from Lancaster writes 'Please help me with two adventures I am stuck on. First in Valkyrie 17 I have successfully got out of Schloss Drakerfeld with the diamond but what do I do next? Secondly, in Sherlock, I have followed the tips to go to the opium den and found Percival Ffoulkes but I cannot prove to Lestrade that he takes opium and he still shoots Percival when he enters'.

In Valkyrie 17, ***when you go out of the room TIPPU the NBO with the NPOPDMF. In*** Sherlock, ***about 11.30 pm on Monday you go to Slater Street and, wearing the chinaman's disguise, go north into the den. Wait for Ffoulkes to arrive, and then remove your disguise. He will confess that he was at the den at the time of the murder. Follow Lestrade around Leatherhead and suggest you have a good look at the stream. I must thank*** Billy Dingwall ***and*** John Jackson ***respectively for the you can! You need the GMBTIMJHIU, the XFMEJOH UPSDI and the spark igniter which can be found in the drawer. You light the GMBTIMJHIU and QPTU it. Stripe will then jump out and all you have to do is light the XFMEJOH UPSDI and DVU the mail box into plates which will be needed later in the game.'***

SUPERHEROES

Paul Wakeling writes on Terrormolinos from Eastbourne 'On Friday the 4th of October I spent three hours on Friday learning what you could and couldn't do. Then the quest started in earnest on Saturday the 5th. 51/2 hrs later at 4.32pm I had arrived back at my house in Slough.' Paul is therefore a SUPERHERO just pipping Matthew Deakin of Redditch who scored 87% in 409 turns with 12 pics taken and 10 successful ones on the 6th of October. M. Scottow of Chingford completed Touchstones of Rhiannon on Thursday September 5th and James Cesareo finished Fourth Protocol on September 27 at 7.04pm.



GRUMPY GUMPHREY

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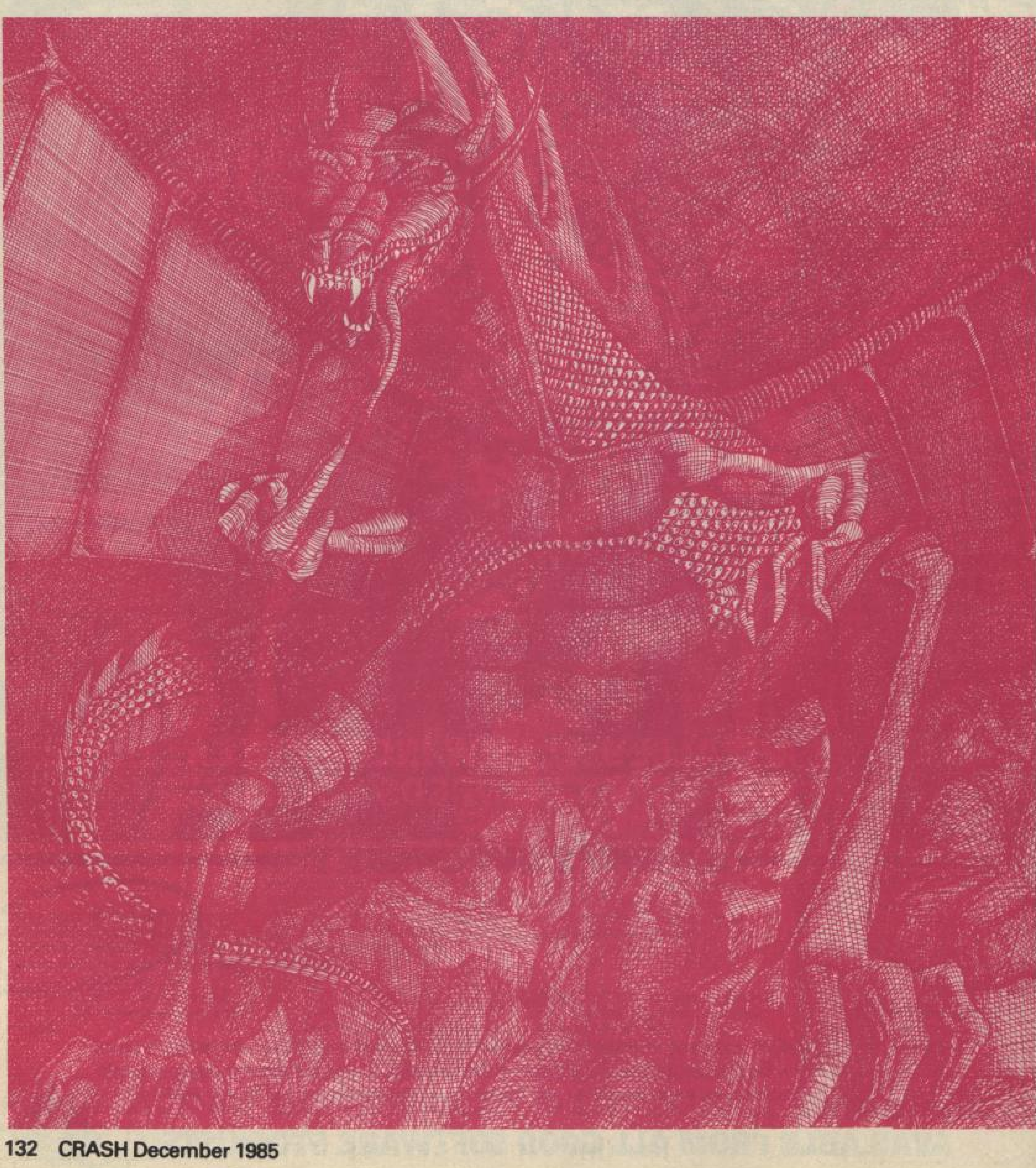
Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423

ENTERING THE DRAGON

A quick peek at some of the entries for the Dk'tronics Dragon Drawing Competition, held in appreciation of the launch of POPEYE, the game.

The Dragon Drawing competition sponsored by Dk'tronics certainly fired quite a few people's imaginations. The back room in Mail Order was bursting at the cornices with entries and we finally managed to coerce the Dragon herself, Sally Newman, to judge the competition.

About three days later she emerged from the back room, breathing fire and clutching a giant carrier bag full of winning entries. Here's a selection from the Popeye Dragon Drawing Competition Winners File. Some excellent work executed by some talented artistic persons. Impressive, huh? A full list of winners appears on the results page proper, a bit later in the magazine.



Robert Prent

WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS

AARGH! IT's THE DRAGON

THE WINNERS who all pick up a copy of Popeye the game from Dk'tronics and,(and this is no mean and) and a Dk'tronics sound synth. Good prize, eh?
Graham Keen, N Humberside; Joel Morris, Chelmsford, CM1 4YG; Robert Prent, Nijkerkerveen, Holland.

RUNNERS UP (Who will have to make do with a quiet Spectrum as they play POPEYE, the game):
M Hawkins, Augusta Rd, Kent; D Gallagher, Beechwood St, BT48 9NJ; N Wildsmith, Hogarth Place, OX14 5LR; R Crosby, The Green, Surrey; S Wood, Harlington Ave, NR6 5LJ; L Ames, Drayton Rd, NR3 2DL; M Edwards, Nursery Gardens, TW18 1EJ; Peter Kilime, Grudrunsvej, Denmark; S Nevill, Norman Rd, B31 2EW; S Summerscales, Woodside Cres, WF17 7DY; R Ives, Joan Ward St, CV3 5FW; P Mititsch, Bengairn St, G31 3QR; T Hall, Garden Close, SE12 4TG; J Adams, Clapham Rd, L4 2TO; P Emms, Old Birmingham Rd, B60 1HH; M Lee, Carlton Rd, EX2 5NS; Alan Mears, Hood Court, NN17 2RH; R Watson, Eaglethorpe Farm, PE8 6TJ; J Neil, West Green, CH5 2SD; T Hawkins, Greenbank Rd, EX32 8EG; D Harris, New Rd, Herts; E Calver, South Hermitage, SY3 7DR; P Gould, Harrow St, TS25 5SE; S A Graham, Green Lane, CA2 7QB; I Harris, Gainsborough Dr, WV6 7NR; C Merry, Glendale Cres, KA7 3RZ; D Warren, Seldon Rd, BS14 8PS.

DYNAMITE DAN RESULTS

Hah! Here are the fifty lucky persons who will soon be receiving their very own copy of Mirrorsoft's smashing platform game. One of the most tuneful and jolly platform games to be written on the Spectrum recently. Wish I won something once in a while . . . but then minions aren't supposed to be winners. Wer're all losers in life. That's our lot. Ho hum.

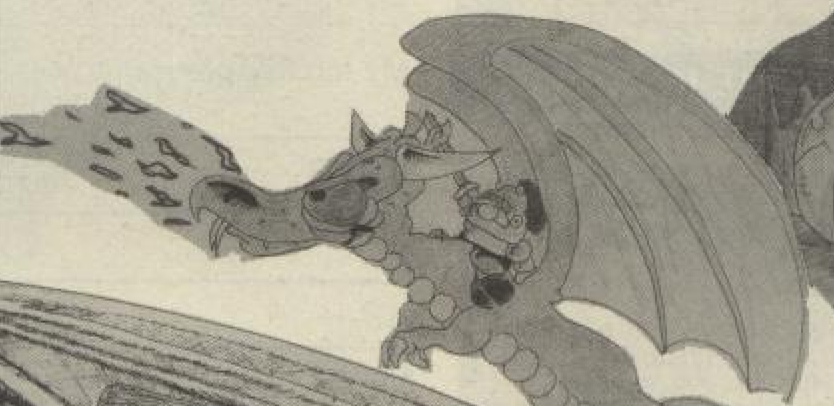
S Ali 51 Ashmead Rd SE8 4DY; P Atkinson 16 Manston Rd WA5 2HS; J Bennet 4 Paews—e—Dywed CF4 8SA; M Black 5 Douglas Gardens—Haydon Bridge—Northumberland; P Boxham 15 Bennet Close OX17 2J2; S Brooks 66 St Johns Rd—Staverely—Nr Chesterfield—Derbyshire; M Brown 7 Geraints Close CF7 7BT; T Cheetham 11 Rectory Gardens—Oldswinford—Stourbridge—W Midlands; I Doggett 35 Bucklesham Rd IP1O OPD; C Fry 36 Oakleigh Ave—Clayton—Bradford; Dick Gaherty 27 Kippax Ave—Wells—Somerset; Tim Grace 49 Druids Cross Gdns LI8 3EB; G Halford 88 Lynbrook Close DY2 9HF; Daniel Hall 17 Clifton Ave N3 1BN; J Hall 22 Parkgate WA16 8HE; Spencer Heywood 7 Chittenden Cotts Surrey; Dick Hill 41 Cherry Orchard GL12 7HT; T Jackson 3 Princess Gardens Woking Surrey; M Jones 48 Tydraw St W Glam; R Judd 9 Croxdale Tce—Pelaw—Gateshead—Tyne And Wear; Pragash Krishnamoorthy 4 Overdale Avenue KT3 3UF; J Lang 297 Link Rd—Asanstey—Leicestershire; C Lewis 29 Oakhill Rd KT21 2JG; A Linghorn 14 Harrowdene Ct—6 Belverdere Drive SW19; M Mard Radiceva 54—4100 Zagreb—Yugoslavia; A McDonnel 93 Elgar Rd Il4 4BU; S McGinley 27 Leven Rd YO2 2TL; A Mellett 3 Beaufort Rd Bristol; Joo Mi Kim 35 Holmesdale Rd TW11 9LJ; P Radley 42 Hoddam Ave GG5 OE7; M Paice 30 Micklehill Drive Sollihull—W Midlands; J Porter 30 Bader Avenue Cleveland; G Powell The Old Vicarage HR2 0QD; C Prettejohn Ruses Mill PL15 9QH; A Reid 32 Pemberton Valley KA7 4UH; Daniel Reynolds 44 Birkenshaw Rd Birmingham; M Sellar 24 Campell Ave EH12 6DN; Wesley Setchfield 31 Oakhurst Close ME5 9AN; B Simpson 15 Belvoir Close SE9 4TD; C Stoneham Salvington—Collingwood Rise TN21 8DN; M Stump 13 The Holt—Abingdon—Oxon—OX14 2DR; D Tate 84 Middleton Rd NR31 7PQ; J Thomas 25 Holly Hedge Road Surrey; D Wallington 42 Station Rd CV35 8XJ; J Walsh 56 Kingfisher Drive Kent; J Wassall 106 Primrose Ave CW1 1QB; S Webb 5 Manor Way—Potton—Beds; S Webster 3 Almond Rd—Gorleston—Great Yarmouth—Norfolk; CW Yau 39 Delaney St NW1 7RS

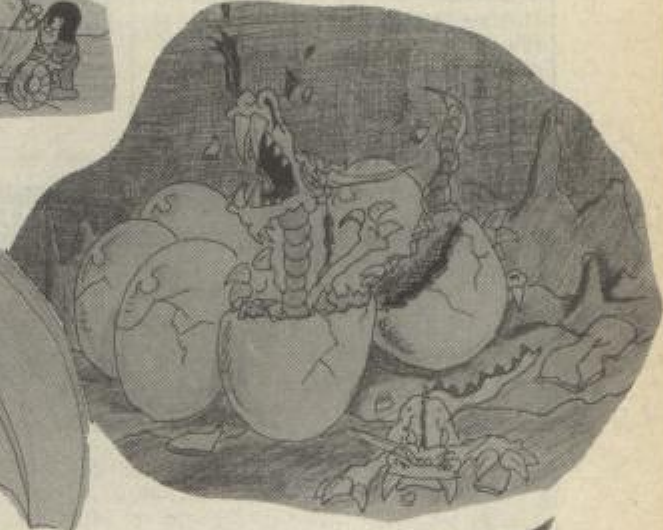
PINBALL WIZARDRY COMPO

Five first prize winners came out of the Competition Minion's hat the other day. These persons all collect a video copy of the classic Rock film, TOMMY courtesy of PSS who ran the compo to celebrate the arrival of their French Import MACADAM BUMPER:

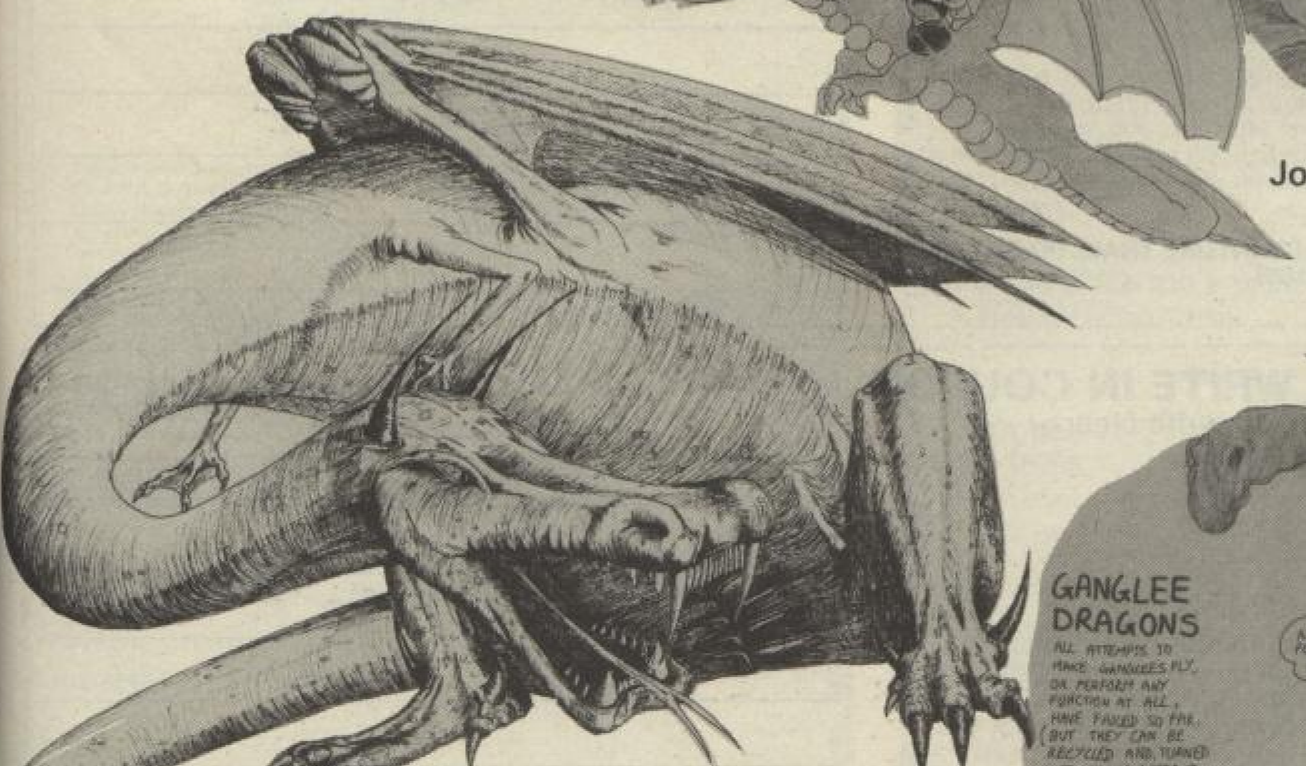
Maqsood Ahmed 51 Reynell Rd M13 0PU; John Hickey 48 Burnham Dve KT4 8ST; Nigel Pritchard 27 Sylvana Close UB10 0BH; Alistair May 20 Institution Rd IV30 1QT; S Ince 47 Clydesdale Mount NE6 2EN;



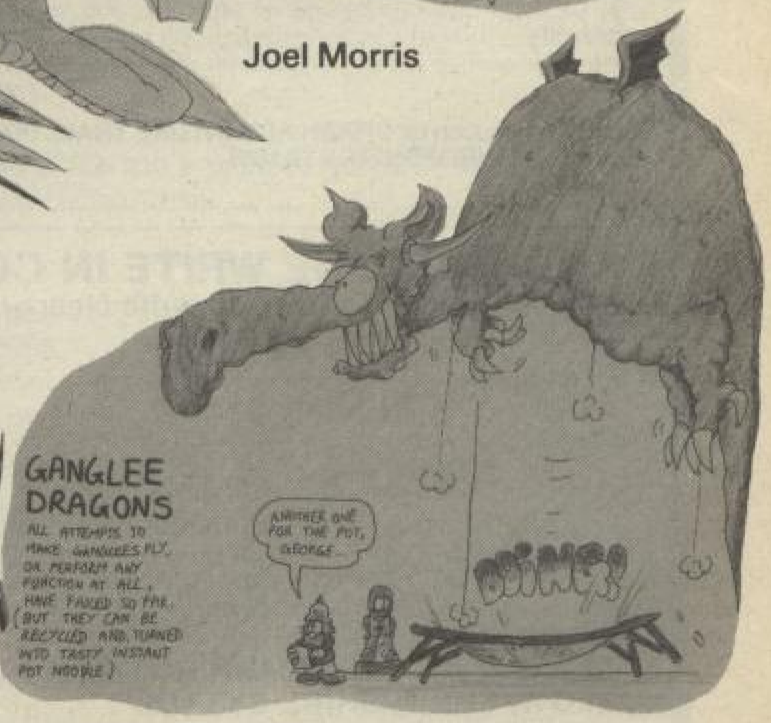




Joel Morris



Graham Keen



WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS



Your favourite Minion has not finished with his yet, ho no. Here's five runners up, who all pick up a copy of the soundtrack of the film on flat vinyl Long Playing discs:

Kevin Fisher Lea Gate Bagstone GL12 8BD; Mark Tamburro 17 Banbury Rd M24 1QB; Graham Persson 46 Balfour St EH6 5ER; Mark Wright 19 Hatchford Brook Rd B92 9AG; Wesley Setchfield 31 Oakhurst Close ME5 9AN

Ever onward with the winners. More Minionly tasks were performed, and now we can present a further twenty five runners up in the PSS comp. (Will it never end —ED.) Each of the undernamed personages all collect a voucher from PSS which will entitle them to £5.00 off any PSS game purchased mail order from PSS HQ in Coventry. And there's a couple a fabbo Spectrum games coming soon from PSS, so don't squander you prizes too quickly lads and lasses.

G Bottrell 75 Wimblington Rd PE15 9QW; Adam Bumpstead 28 Buttlegate PL11 3NQ; Ian Champion 46 Warren Gdns Warren Lane S30 4XZ; Iain Davies 15 Maple Cres PO8 0LP; Mike Dunigan 9 Eskdale Close Weston S Mare; Zak Gucklhorn 6 Manor Way HA2 6BY; John Hooley 17 Ellesmere Rd TW1 2DJ; Howard Horton 32 Rownall Rd Werrington Stoke On Trent; Robert Hughes 5a Warwick Ave CV5 6DJ; Ian Hunt 186 Old Lodge Lane CR2 4AN; Matthew Jackson 9 Selborne Rd DA14 4QP; M Lovell The Gables BA22 9LS; Mitchinson 14 Park Court LS21 1LF; Ian Muir 15 Crofthead Dve NE23 6LG; D Parry 10 Purcell Ave TN10 4DP; Jamie Paterson 30 The Malting PE17 1LZ; Lee Prutton 9 Jubilee Cres SG15 6SB; Don Ramsay 21 Thirlmere Gdns BD2 4NN; P Saunders 28 Polwithen Rd TR10 8QT; Kevin Shuttlewood Ind House Dunmow Rd CM22 6SP; Michael Slater 23 Wood Top BL0 9EN; J Stacey 99 East Hill SW18 2QD; Paul Taylor 19 Edgewood Dve NG15 6HX; Wayne Thirlwell 25 Thomas St SR2 0RF; R Julie Williams 87 Pelham Rd WA4 2HA;

PHONE-IN HOTLINE DISCONTINUED

Voting for the CRASH Hotline and Adventure Chart can no longer be done by phone — too many rude phone calls upset the neighbours!

But don't despair, you can still cast your vote for the two CRASH charts, so long as you do it by post and use the coupons below (or a photocopy). Each month we'll still be drawing five lucky prize-winners out of the Hotline Vote Bag, and five more winners will come out of the Adventure Chart Cask. First coupon out for both charts wins £40 of software and a CRASH T-Shirt with four runners up from each sack of mail collecting a T-Shirt and a super dooper CRASH Hat.

HOTLINE VOTING - Your Favourite Five

It's as simple as ABC(DE)! All you have to do is list your favourite five programs, in descending order, next to the little numbers on the coupon and whizz it off to us.

ADVENTURE CHART VOTING

After much deliberation, we've decided to limit the number of games you can vote for on the Adventure Chart to five. No longer can you keep on voting for as many games as you like (or can think of). It's five adventure games only now, folks. You still need to give each game you vote for a mark out of ten, however, so we can apply a cunningly derived mathematical formula to everyone's votes and come up with the final ranking. Quite simple really, for you if not for us.

DON'T FORGET

The telephone number for the Hotline Phone-In has been discontinued, so don't waste your time and money trying to ring in Hotline or Adventure Chart votes. Postal votes only chaps and chappesses, on the coupons to PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB. If you want to save money you can pop the coupons in the same envelope as your competition entries — so long as you mark it MULTIPLE ENTRY.

Get Voting. . . .

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postcode

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TITLE	VOTE OUT OF TEN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

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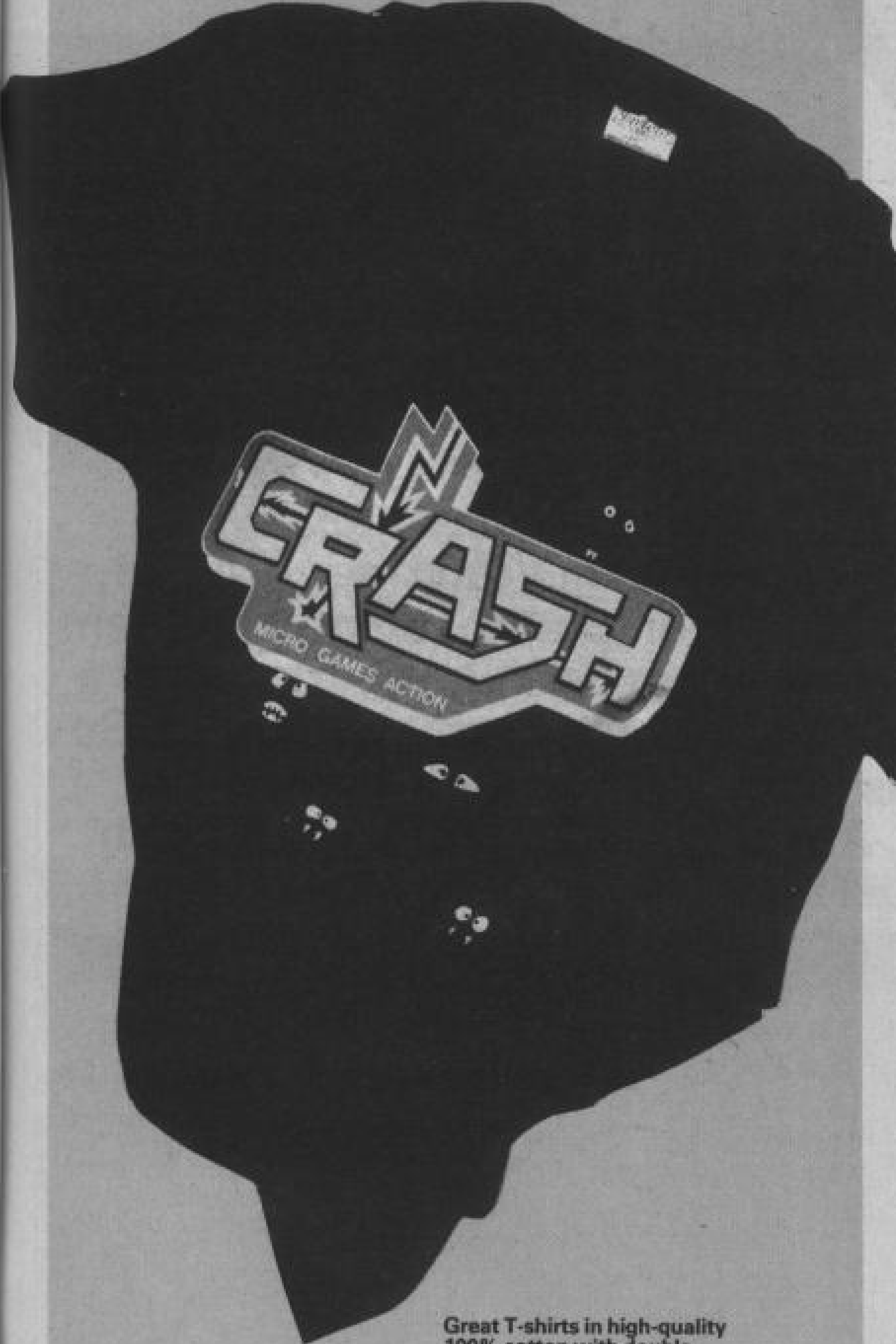
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3	
4	
5	

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There's absolutely no excuse for missing out on the Christmas Special this year. We'll be printing lots of copies, and each one will contain a completely free, giant A1 size Oliposter, with a full colour Oli picture painted specially for the occasion on each side.

But there's going to be more. At least a dozen competitions, with some very special prizes on offer indeed, a bumper playing tips section, Lloyd Mangram's lookback on the year that was 1985 as well as a host of interviews and profiles with interesting people. (We're not telling you who yet — it's fun keeping a secret).

And of course the usual sprinkling of festive features, culinary hints and Chrimble memorabilia that you would expect to find in the Christmas Edition of any self-respecting way-of-life magazine. All crammed into nearly two hundred pages, with the cover bursting at the staples.



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FRONTLINE



Mr Masterson, the new Strategy and Wargaming minion on CRASH reflects on the fluff that has been gathering in his navel since last he wrote FRONTLINE, pauses to ponder what a strategy game about the Falklands war could have in store for us (conveniently ignoring penguins) and gets stuck into a good Napoleonic dust up.

Since someone on our sister magazine for the Amstrad, AMTIX!, roped him into reviewing strategy games on that machine and then called him a leprechaun into the bargain, our Sean has had a bit of a downer on Amstrads and just about everything to do with them. So don't hold too much store with his inability to write the word Amstrad in full. He's only sulking. Anyway, enough of this, on with the show. Over to you, SEAN MASTERSON. (Rah! Rah!).

GET YOUR FILTHY HANDS OFF MY DESERT

IT WOULD APPEAR that I'm getting noticed. That isn't necessarily a good thing for a poor, CRASH minion. It's hard to tell whether you are achieving popularity or notoriety, sometimes. Still, the world will go on regardless, and while it does, so shall this column. I'm glad last month's comments on morality in wargaming went down well (as far as I could tell). I shall try not to be too provocative in future. No news is good news after all.

Recently, I dealt with PSS's *Battle of Britain* for the A****** computer, in another magazine. (Oh all right then AMTIX!) It's a superb game. When I see the Spectrum version, I shall let you know. Of course, there is now news that PSS are doing a *Falklands '82* scenario. Some people are saying that this is a little too close to the knuckle. Bad taste. I would say perhaps the issue was being prejudged. It may even point out some interesting details presently unknown to interested parties. It all depends on how well the simulation is done.

Perhaps it will put you in *full* command of the task force — unlike the commanders of the actual battle. It may allow strategic decisions to be made that were not made available to the officers of the force in the conflict. High level bombing of enemy mainland airstrips before the arrival of the task force, for example. I wonder what effect that could have had on ship and personnel losses? I honestly think that everybody should give PSS the benefit of the doubt until the game is published. Then we will see.

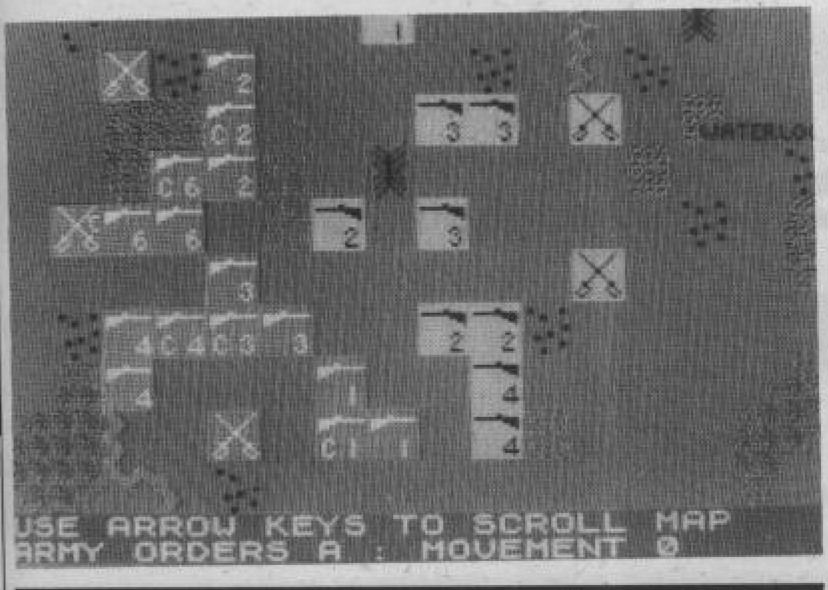
WATERLOO

Producer: Lothlorien
Retail Price: **£9.95**

This must be the most popular period enjoyed by the traditional wargamer (with the possible exception of Ancient) and so it was a pleasure to find a new Napoleonic game released — on the classic battle itself. I was doubly impressed to discover Lothlorien were the publishers. They got off to something of a dodgy start but *The Bulge* was a classic and my respect for them has been far higher since. The packaging of their products has certainly improved since the early days. *Waterloo* comes beautifully packaged in a large format cassette holder with excellent artwork and a slim but excellent manual which many conventional wargames companies would do well to examine before they released their next title.

The game is a strategic simulation on divisional level of the battle that finally brought Napoleon to his downfall. Napoleon was on his way to Brussels to gain support for his forces from Brussels. However, he must first defeat the Anglo-Dutch force commanded by the Duke of Wellington from the Seventh Coalition. Napoleon had a stronger force than his opponent but Wellington had superb defensive positions that cut across his adversary's front lines. Plus, he knew that if he fought a defensive strategy long enough, reinforcements would soon arrive in the form of General Blucher's Prussian army. And so the stage is set for a one player game with the human participant playing Napoleon.

The game has a smooth scrolling 'plan' of the battlefield as a display. The scrolling really is smooth on this game — far superior to other games of this nature that boast the same feature. Units are displayed as divisional markers, each unit coloured according to nationality. Displayed on the markers is information pertaining to the nature of the unit such as whether it is cavalry or infantry. On the French units the Corps number and command status is also shown. On requesting a detailed report of a unit, the marker widens to twice its original length and the unit's strength in terms of fighting men and its morale are displayed. On enemy units however,



French infantry (on the left) push the English troops back towards Waterloo. Cavalry units guard against any outflanking attempt by Wellington's forces

only the strength is displayed.

Handling the units is accomplished by using a straightforward mini-menu at the bottom of the display area in conjunction with cursor control. Units can be commanded as a Corps (by giving a general command to the leading division) or individually. It's possible to alter the level of difficulty of the game by varying the number of unit orders that may exist simultaneously. Units may actually leave their set positions to follow commanding units if they leave the immediate vicinity.

One of the interesting features of the game is the way a unit may be prevented from achieving its orders because of enemy resistance (or maybe just presence) but after the threat is passed, the unit will continue on its original course of action. This isn't a totally original feature to computer wargaming but rarely is it used so realistically. One up for Lothlorien.

Movement is affected by type of unit and terrain, as you would expect but terrain also affects combat strength to varying degrees, depending on whether they are attacking or defending. Combat strength is also (logically) affected by how many active men exist in the unit and its morale. Combat takes place between any two adjacent enemy units. Combat losses are displayed as they occur, over the relevant unit. This is only brief but you can study the situation more fully at the end of the game turn.

Combat can, of course, result in one of the divisions involved retreating or routing. Routing units are removed from play immediately. Retreating units may be eliminated of their paths of retreat are not clear. Because such units are considered to be at least in partial disarray, they will inflict fewer casualties when fighting.

When orders have been issued to all the units for that turn, the computer carries out all the movements and combat actions in a clearly defined manner. During this time, various commanders will communicate with you and explain that the orders you have given them are problematical because of a change in the unit's situation. They will suggest a course of action as an alternative and you answer the question depending on your strategy.

The manual contains detailed explanations of the victory conditions and they, themselves offer a challenging game for the player whilst remaining balanced. On the subject of which, Lothlorien have made one omission and two alterations to details of the battle in order to make it more playable. Firstly, there is no consideration taken of artillery (a shame considering all the trouble Napoleon took to get it there), so there is no indirect fire phase. Secondly, Napoleon has been given an extra Corps, to balance numbers, whilst Blucher's minions arrive on the scene earlier to add to the difficulty.

Lothlorien really have come a long way since those early days. This wargame is fast, playable and deceptively complicated. Designed with a care rarely encountered in computer wargaming, it employs some of the best features of the purists' hobby — and to good effect. A classic game for a classic subject.

PRESENTATION 90%
Excellent

RULES 85%
Deceptively simple but very direct

PLAYABILITY 87%
'Fool proof' approach successfully implemented

GRAPHICS 92%
Beautiful scrolling for a wargame

AUTHENTICITY 87%
Details only modified slightly and for playability. General historical integrity maintained

VALUE FOR MONEY 95%
Plenty of scope within the game. Won't wear out overnight by any means

OVERALL 92%
It's great to have a classic game to review

DON'T BE A WALLY! JOIN
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A 64K SPECTRUM

Complete your Wally Week collection — or get it off to a good start

AUTOMANIA

The very first Wally Week game, in which the silly fellow is introduced, working in a car factory. No ordinary car factory this one, however. Wally's the only employee and he has to assemble ten cars, each of which is made from six parts. The car parts are scattered about a stock room and Wally has to scamper up and down platforms avoiding a range of nasties to collect them. Once he's got a part, it's back to the assembly area where he adds it to the car.
General rating: very good to excellent, playable and addictive



PYJAMARAMA

"A working class hero's the thing to be" sang John Lennon. And Wally's back as the hero in the first **Mikro-Gen** arcade adventure. The mad car assembler's asleep in his bed, in the middle of a nightmare. It's your task to wake him up in time to get to work in the car factory. You wander around Wally's house as his pyjama-clad alter ego in the dream, trying to find the key that winds up the alarm clock that will wake Wally up. All sorts of nasties are found in the Wally abode — it is a dream after all. Can you Wake Wally in time for Work?
General rating: highly addictive, playable, good value — excellent



EVERYONE'S A WALLY

This game sees the debut of the Wally clan, including Wilma, Tom, Dick and Harry — and of course Herbert who went on to greater things, starring in his own game. Another arcade adventure, with lots to do and more than one person to control. You can switch control from character to character (apart from Herbert, who's uncontrollable). A variety of tasks have to be performed by the members of Wally's Gang, whose ultimate aim is to become rich . . . Plenty of puzzles to solve
General rating: excellent



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Get up for work early!

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Another coup for Wallies Everywhere

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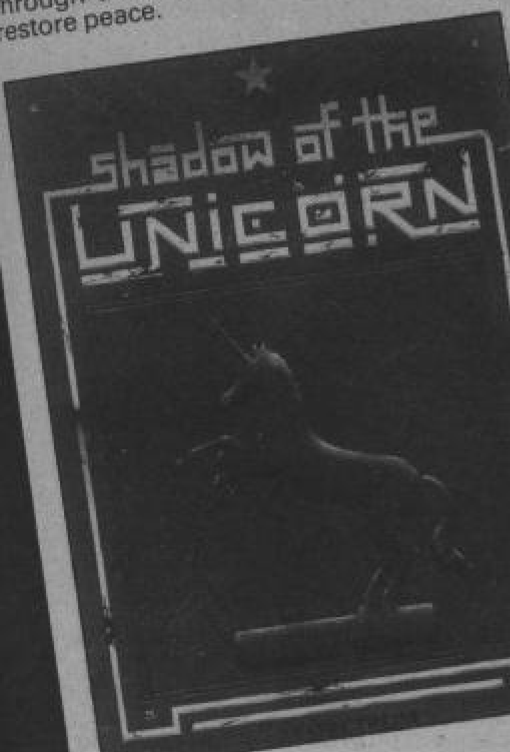
Just because you're smart enough to have already purchased a subscription to this August Journal (*It's the December issue, dolt* — **ED**) . . . to this wonderful journal of Spectrum Software, doesn't mean Aggie the Wonderful will work to rule and refuse to do the Jiffy Bag for you.

Oh no, just tell her your subscriber number and for £4.95 she'll send you your choice of two of the games mentioned above which star Wally Week. Alternatively, for £10.00 you could have Shadow of the Unicorn. And if you're really greedy, £14.95 will bring you Shadow and two of the three games. (But you'll have to write Aggie a nice covering letter — she'll do almost anything for a bit of flattery).

The very least you can save is £4.95 and you could, if you were very greedy, end up saving nearly £12.00!

SHADOW OF THE UNICORN

So new we haven't reviewed it yet! It's still with Derek Brewster, but the package passed though our hands and was previewed in the September issue. The first game to use the Mikro-Plus, which allows the programmers to put in up to 50% more game according to its makers. They're playing with 64K not 48K, owing to the hardware add-on which acts as a joystick interface and head alignment doobrie for your cassette player too. You also get a 120 page book with the game. A massive playing area which you roam, controlling any one of ten characters, guiding them through a land in turmoil on a quest to restore peace.



DON'T LET ME BE LEFT OUT AGGIE DARLING

? I want twelve consecutive issues of the wonderful CRASH magazine hand delivered through my letterbox by the postie each month. For this I'm happy to pay £14.50 and I understand I can have any two of the three Wally Week games for absolutely free. I'm not a Wally, see Aggie! Tell the Subscription Queen, Denise to put my name and address in her computer.

I've even crossed out the game I don't want in the list of three below:

AUTOMANIA
PYJAMARAMA
EVERYONE'S A WALLY

NB Number One. OFFER CLOSES 31st December 1985
NB Number Two. You can photocopy this form if you want your copy of CRASH intact. Thoughtful of us, eh?

? I've decided I'd rather have a 64K Spectrum rather than a couple of Wallies with my subscription. I understand that this is a little more expensive, as SHADOW OF THE UNICORN does sell for £14.95, and has only just been released. Therefore I enclose £18.00 for a twelve month subscription to CRASH and a copy of the SHADOW OF THE UNICORN package, which I understand you'll pop into a jiffy bag for me, and seal it with a kiss, eh Aggie. I want to be the envy of my friends.

Right, now no mistakes eh? Make sure you've made your mind up and then write out a cheque or postal order for the correct amount made payable to CRASH MICRO. No coins, 103-er conkers or back numbers of BUNTY accepted in part payment. Strictly cheques and postal orders only — we've got the Ludlow Mafia dues to pay and they like negotiable instruments. (And sharp ones too, which they prod into Minions who don't cough up, so hurry up!)

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And I live at ____________________

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OK, now the put it all in an envelope, pausing only to check that the right amount of loot is enclosed, that you know what you want and have marked it clearly and that you've filled in your address nice 'n neat. Stick down the envelope. Send it to:

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SY8 1DB

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5 June 84	● New Generation ● Jet Set Willy Map ● 'Panic' games ● Alphacom printer
6 July 84	● 3D in games ● Atic Atac Map 1 ● Specgraf ● 'Pacman' games
8 September 84	● Tir Na Nog ● Downsway & Comcon i'face ● White Lightning graphics utility ● Martin Wheeler ● Antic Map ● Design Design ● Lothlorien
9 October 84	● Games Workshop ● Dk'Tronics
10 November 84	● Battlefield Joystick — comparisons ● Deus Ex Machina
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17 June 85	● Denton Designs ● Frankie ● Spectrum surgery ● Sinclair Story 3 ● Knight Lore Map 1 ● Underwurlde Map 2 ● Tape to Microdrive ● Leonardo graphics utility ● Datel sound sampler ● Artist: David Thorpe
18 July 1985	●Gremlin Graphics profile●Artist Bob Wakelin●Sinclair TV●Tape Magazines●Leonardo utility part two●CRASHBACK looks again at games in Issue 8●Gyron map of Atrium●Modems round-up ●And the cover that had the Jehova's Jumping!
19 August 1985	*WITHOUT PAGES 123, 124, 125 and 126. WITH:* ●CRL Profile●Pull out Oliposter — Fighting Spectrum●Mirrorsoft Profile●Inside the Timex 2068●Round Up of BASIC Compilers●On the Cover Artist Rich Shenfield●Maps of Dynamite Dan and Shadowfire
20 September 1985	●ALIEN 8 and DUN DARACH maps●Electronic Pencil Company Profile●Part Two of BASIC Compilers Round-up●The 64K Spectrum●Design Design Autoprofile, Part 1●Rod Cousens interview
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Issues 2, 7, 12, 13 and 14 are now out of stock

Back issues are going fast — better get your orders in quick. It's probably worth telephoning if you want to order early issues, as we're getting short. And if you missed Issue 19, we can now complete the gap in your collection with a trimmed down version, which has a tasteful sticker added to the front cover announcing the fact!

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BACK NUMBERS
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Robot
MESSIAH

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"ROBOT MESSIAH" written by Christian Urquhart and Mike Smith

Christian Urquhart is also the author of 'Hunchback' & co-author of Daley Thompson's 'Decathlon'

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DESIGN DESIGN — THE FINAL PANIC

OH DEAR! Here we go again, it's 12.00pm and CRASH want this article tomorrow. Yet another mad panic! On the whole it's been a month of mad panics. I wonder if any of you out there have ever sat down and thought about how long it takes to put a game out and what's actually involved?

First one needs the artwork for the game, or in our case two games. This usually starts life as a few lines scrawled on either Dave's or my note pads. From these humble beginnings our Ad Agency has the arduous task of producing the full colour air-brushed masterpieces that appear on the finished product. In the case of *Forbidden Planet* we used a photo which made life easier, though it wasn't one of Keith's in the end. Something to do with the vibration passing juggernauts cause if you're standing on a Motorway bridge, hoping those headlights coming slowly up the hard shoulder don't belong to a member of the local constabulary! However *2112AD*'s cover had to be air-brushed, and this takes about a week to do. Anyhow, we did end up with some excellent artwork in the end (see our ad somewhere in this CRASH).

One the problems with artwork have been sorted out there comes the business of posters and adverts. Posters obviously take some time to be printed, and adverts have to be designed, produced and delivered to the Mags about two weeks before they are due to be published. Well I say two weeks — there are Magazines which demand ads six weeks in advance. CRASH I'm glad to say is not one of them.

Next in the line of tasks that lead up to the release of a game is the great packaging fiasco. This time round, "packaging" involved looking at all the available boxes and library cases, deciding on one we all liked, and then discovering that the manufacturers have sold all the cases they can produce up until January. Rumors are running round the industry that U.S. Carat have bought all the 250,000 available double-audio cases.

As luck would have it Keith Miller of **PDD**, our tape duplicators (*More of him and them next ish, maybe —* **ED**), found another similar case that we could use with our design of packaging. A word of thanks to PDD at this point, largely for continuing to meet our unreasonable demands (*Hello, can we have a thousand Dark Stars and five hundred On The Runs by tomorrow please?* etc).

Having organised the advertising, posters and packaging I can turn to Graham and Simon and say "O.K. Guys we're releasing the programs on the 19th of November." This is rather akin to typing launch codes into ICBMs, at least in terms of the explosion such statements usually cause amongst our programming department. Still, after the listings and floppies have settled back to the floor, and Simon's blood pressure has returned to normal, our programmers start their own mad rush to provide PDD with masters, and enough time to duplicate the tapes. During this final bit of the **Great New Game Panic** we see the battle of Dave, Brian (Ad agency bod) and myself versus Graham and Simon, in which we try to get the programmers to write their inlays, and they complain that they can't as they don't know what their games are going to do. This is all quite pointless as I usually write the inlays anyway. The CRASH Minion complains! He should try coping with this lot!

At lunchtime today a black streak flashed past the office window heralding Graham's imminent appearance. Brandishing microdrive cartridges by the dozen, he gleefully bounced into the office like a young cruise missile, took over Simon's desk, plugged his revolting microdrive into the office Spectrum and demoed a nearly completed *2112AD* to us. So here we go lads & lassies it's PREVIEW TIME. (*Yeeeaaah !!!*).

GRAHAM'S GAME

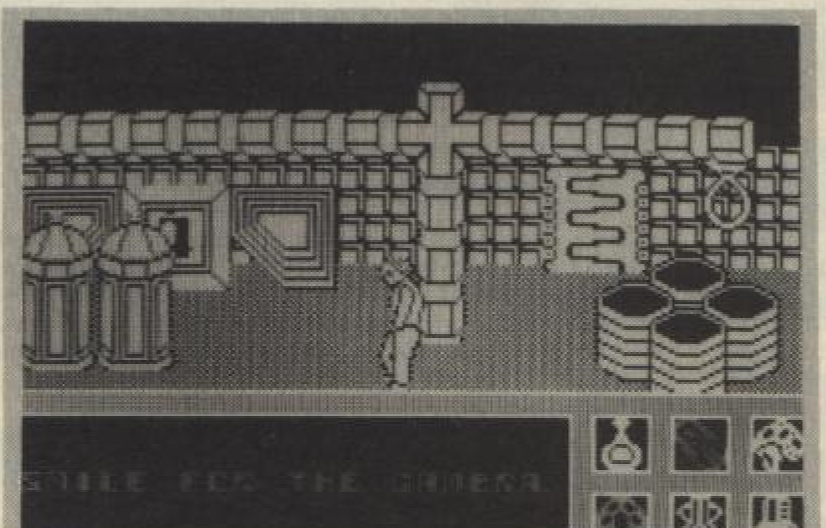
The action in *2112AD* takes place in the Central Government Computer Complex, after the said computer has thrown something of a wobbler and decided it can run the country far better on its own. Your mission is to enter the C.G.C.C. and gain control of the computer. This is achieved by finding the ten security codes and feeding them, in the right order, into the main terminal.

Your task is not made any easier by the presence of a maintainance droid which regards you as garbage since you happen to be organic. Nor is life made any simpler by the fact that most of the interconecting doors are locked. To open or close one of these doors you will need the relevant access card. These, too, must be searched for. To help you in your task, you have a robotic dog 'Poddy' to assist you. Poddy can do certain things you cannot. To start with he lugs your food about for you, and the all important first aid kit (You'll have to wait for the game to see what you need that for!).

Poddy's main function is to carry things around for you. Your character can only carry three objects at any one time, whilst Poddy can carry far more. However, a well loaded Poddy does not move as fast as an unloaded one. Being an electric creation, not unlike a canine C5, Poddy will need his batteries charging from time to time. This is done by plugging him into one of the power outlets dotted about the building; Graham tells me they will look like 13 amp sockets!

You are provided with status displays for both your character and Poddy. These are got at by use of the icon game control system. There are various icons displayed at the bottom of the screen, such as pick up, drop, drive Poddy about and so on, some of which execute a specific function while others take you to other displays and icons. There is also a HELP icon. When selected this shows all the icons and their functions.

It is through the icon system that you control Poddy, though to exchange objects you are carrying with objects Poddy is dragging about, your character must be standing next to him. Throughout the game you MUST pay attention to Poddy's whereabouts and state of being: remember, he cannot move about as fast as you can, and you can't complete *2112AD* without his help.



SIMON'S GAME

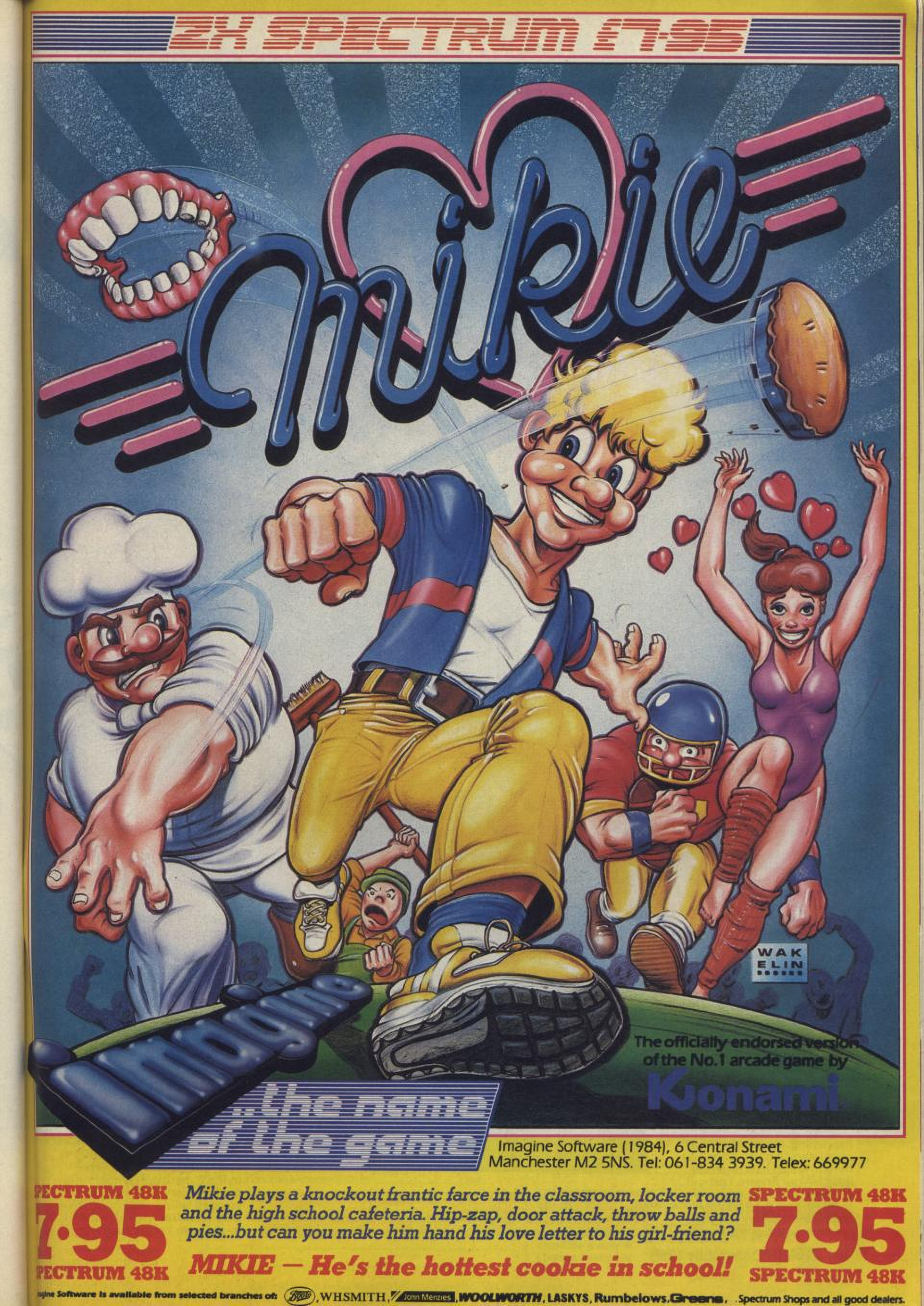
As to the great *Forbidden Planet*, beware of three other programs we've stuck on the tape because we thought they were amusing: *Spectacle 2*; a recently modified version of *Halls*, and something written by Simon's girlfriend Leslie, and rumored to be very embarrassing. (In fact Simon has just finished converting *Halls* for the Amstrad whilst I have been writing this.)

Forbidden Planet itself is proceeding well. All the windowing is now going, and a myriad of new objects has been created, including a particularly nasty fighter that flies about in front of you then launches a pair of air to air missiles at you. Flying low is a good way to avoid such things, but this puts you in the line of fire from the surface to air missiles. The maps are also now working, though *Forbidden Planet*'s map is much larger than *Dark Star*'s surface maps. It also works as a window onto a much larger map. It is worth spending time flying around and feeling out the defences before ploughing into them in search of the central command bunker.

The object of *F.P.* is to destroy the last stronghold of the now largely eradicated Galactic Tyranny. This involves flying through surface defences far more complex than those seen in *Dark Star* to the central site. Should you achieve this and destroy the Central Command Bunker, it then becomes your responsibility to get you and your ship back through the now disorganised defences and off the planet. There will be a lot more to it than that, but at the moment ideas are still being accepted and rejected on a day to day basis. The game is changing overnight, almost every night and improving every time, but you'll have to wait and see how it all turns out.

So off to Ludlow in three hours! I wonder how Graham is going to react to finding his car has been fitted with a cardboard window. Graham borrowed the hire car we have at the moment (this is because someone broke into Simon's Astra and nicked the front seats), and left us his Astra. When Simon and I went out at about 1.00am in search of coffee, we discovered that some member of the ungodly had broken into Graham's car. I really don't think he's going to be very pleased about this! Oh well, at least I can run faster than him.

See you in the Christmas Special if Graham doesn't get me first!



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D-D-DOMARK's N-N-EW G-G-G-GAME . . .

ON THE DAY BEFORE FRIDAY, the **Domark** entourage appeared, bloodied and terrified after their journey through the fog which lay thick as a shroud over the Shropshire hills. The fog had been bad enough but what had really taken its toll on these poor gentleman was the contents of their briefcase.

We were led into the darkened games room, the briefcase was placed onto the table and, gently, a cassette was removed. It was *Friday the 13th* t h e g a m e. Since 1980 Jason has been terrifying cinema audiences up and down the land. Now, irresponsible though it may seem, Domark are bringing Jason into your own home, perhaps into your own bedroom. We waited, trembling, as the game loaded and the horrible events that had led to the game's production were explained.

A long while ago (during the fifties or something) on Friday the 13th, Jason's Mum was murdered. He suspected that one of the campers at the Crystal Lake Holiday Camp had done her in. This was in fact true but at the time the murderer and the now expired Mum had been under the impression that Jason himself was dead. Well he wasn't, but he was very, very cross when he discovered that his Mum had been killed. On Friday the 13th p a r t t w o, this former lovable and amiable chap came back to avenge his Mother's death. It is on this second film that Domark have based their game.

After the game had loaded Mark Strachan (the 'mark' in Domark) explained what was happening. It's hard trying to understand a game when you have to watch it through the gaps in your fingers. I caught glimpses of happy campers roaming about the holiday camp. Well holiday camps themselves are pretty horrific, but experience told me that worse was to come.



Run Away, Run Away. Jason the mad mass murderer's on his way. Tasteful chaps, these Domark fellows, trying to frighten the life out of the CRASH team with scary software

It seems that the player takes the part of one of the campers at the time of Jason's return. To win the game you must either get all of the other campers into the sanctuary — the room with a cross in it where they will be safe from Jason's avenging mood — or, if you can swing it, kill Jason.



Cuddly chap, this Jason fellow eh? Must remember not to invite him round for tea — his idea of setting a table for two is a bit gruesome . .

Your major problem is discovering which of the campers is Jason. It is possible that while you are stumbling from one location to another trying to herd the campers into the sanctuary, you may just find yourself telling Jason that Jason is coming. Jason may respond by trying to bury something or



The gory loading screen from the Spectrum version of FRIDAY 13th THE GAME. Yucchie Poo!

FRIDAY THE 13TH!

other in your head. Of course at the moment of impact you realise Just who Jason is, but it's getting a bit late by then!

If you keep a careful eye on the other campers you may be able to spot Jason when he attacks someone else — there'll be a tell-tale flashing of the screen when Jason's laying into someone. The moment you spot him he transforms into the horrible masked spectacle we have all come to fear. But if you lose sight of him again he reverts back to anonymity.

The game can safely be described as an arcade adventure. There are a number of locations for you to visit including a barn and a church, a wide selection of weapons to discover and wield as well as some generally unpleasant surprises. You must defeat Jason in each of five levels which are similar except that the sanctuary room is located in a different position each time. Should Jason come into the sanctuary room while your campers are in it, he can't harm them — but they get frightened and don't want to stay there. You'll have to pick up the Sanctuary Cross and move it to a new location and start assembling the campers there.

When you start a new game you can select the personality and qualities of the character you play. Your chances of beating Jason depend on the order in which you rank such characteristics as intelligence, scareability, strength and stamina. If you succeed and defeat the monster then for the next level of the game Jason takes on the template of characteristics that you selected for your winning level. Unless you pick a new set of characteristics you find yourself evenly matched — not a very desirable situation to be in.



Mark and Dominic loon about in the Domark boardroom with lots of plastic blood and a side of ribs

A whole variety of nasties were in the Domark goodie-bag. Blood capsules, plastic bats — a veritable cauldronfull of nasties. Mark and Dominic are obviously getting into the mood for this game. By the time they left the office Aggie in Mail order was quivering with fear, having had a rubber spider thrown at her and been stabbed by the Mad Leprichaun, Sean Masterson (with one of Domark's plastic trick knives, I must hasten to add, where the blade retracts into the handle).

It was a wretched experience. I did, until today, have a cat called Jason, now I'm going to call it Sydney or Cecil or anything, but not Jason. I just don't want to live with a fiend like that. I hope that I pull myself together in time to review the game next month . . . maybe I could get a mug like Gary Liddon to do it. One thing's for certain though, I'm not spending another afternoon in a dark room with Domark, it's just too horrific.

JEREMY (Who's afraid of the dark) SPENCER



An Andrew Spencer / Elite Joint Production
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CBM64 SCREEN SHOT
FLYERS
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A LOOK INTO ANOTHER WORLD — SWEEVO'S

Gargoyle Games decided to do something a little different — "Just for fun". Robin Candy took the opportunity to take a peek into SWEEVO's WORLD and found a historical document that explained much . . . .

Craig, a scientist, was obsessed with the creation of force fields. Flying in the face of scientific advisors, (employed by his really incredibly rich family, to make sure that he created nothing too dangerous), Craig spent millions of Eurodollars building a meson accelerator and multiple particle capture-chambers.

Within three months, to everyone's amazement, Craig's research team had found enough information to generate a small, but perfectly impermeable, force field. In a flurry of **Told-You-So** Craig published his findings in every available scientific journal — only to find himself excommunicated by his very rich family for giving away the single most lucrative invention in two millenia, and thereby ensuring that the family would never become mindblowingly amazingly rich.

And seeing as how Craig published his findings very widely indeed, almost every hostile, warlike nation in the world got to hear of them.

Shortly after this widespread dissemination of knowledge Craig Spheres (the common term given to the forcefields) were erected over every major city and country while his family sulked. And not a Eurocent in royalties did Craig earn for the widespread use of his spheres. When the Five Hour War broke out all the missiles dissolved harmlessly into the domes. (See *Marsport* booklet for more details.)

About a year after the Five Hours War, MANIA (Man Alone No Intelligent Apes) attacked and destroyed the SAL (Simian Advancement Laboratory) research station. This research area had been training apes to do menial tasks and scientists in SAL had succeeded in raising the intelligence of the average ape to that of a bright toddler. Fortunately, when the station was destroyed by the MANIA commandos, not all the research findings were destroyed. Some fifty years later some of the discoveries made at SAL were employed in the programming of the Self Willed Vocational series of Robots, which came to include the SWEEVO Class of SWVR.

SWEEVO stands for Self Willed Extreme Environment Vocational Organism — which means he is a bit like our Gary Liddon: if it can be lost, knocked over or broken then you can bet SWEEVO or Mr Liddon is the one to do it! In the game from Gargoyle, poor old Sweevo has got himself into a spot of bother and you've got to help him out.

Sweevo's been sent to on a new found world and has to trap several creatures in cages. At the time of writing, these creatures haven't been named formally, but for the want of calling them something, Gargoyle's Greg Follis calls them the Widgers. Widgers are not the simplest of things to catch, because they move about the rooms which form Sweevo's World. They can be herded, however.

In the game, you control Sweevo and there are actually several ways to catch the Widgers. You can try herding them in cages yourself, or you can use an electronic dog (this must be found) to act as a sort of sheep dog. There are also several other methods none of which Greg would divulge (*probably hasn't thought of them yet —* **ED**). The Widgers aren't the only creatures on Sweevo's world; the game would be far too easy if they were. All sorts of other characters will pop up during the game and generally get in the way, including the Horrible Little Girl, who has a tendency to hit you on the head, and the Goose Stepping Dictator. At certain points in the game these creatures decide to come after you and they must be dealt with in different ways.



Graphically, the game looks like a funny version of *Fairlight* but with wackier graphics. One other difference between *Sweevo's World* and other games that look a bit similar is the speed; the latest Gargoyle Game plays a lot faster than the likes of *Fairlight*. The four corners of the screen will display information relating to the game. In the top right corner there is going to be a face which shows Sweevo's energy level by the smile expressed, while in the other corners objects carried, messages, and the characters which are chasing Sweevo will be displayed.

People who found the problems in *Marsport* a bit tough will find *Sweevo's World* much more playable; the game is definitely aimed more at the arcade market. If you are a puzzle solving freak then don't be put off. The problems in this game take a much more active form in their solution. To get a particular object you may have to go up in a lift, activate a pressure pad by putting an object on it, and then jump over the last obstacle by bouncing on a trampoline for instance.

The game is spread over 200 screens and several levels with lots of problems to solve. As well as the movement keys you'll also have a pick up and drop button and a fire button. (You can attack characters, but you must have the right weapon.)

If nothing else then *Sweevo's World* promises to be a bit of fun. Oh, by the way, beware of the fruit!

Sweevo's World should be available around the end of November priced £7.95 from Gargoyle Games.

ROBIN CANDY

WRAP UP STYLISH WARM THIS WINTER

YOU COUL S
ROBOT M SS

YOUR SPECTRUM CO
WEARING A SAG E



Crash Competition



LD SNUGGLE INTO A IESSIAH T SHIRT

MCOULD BE GAELITE KEYBOARD!



Last issue we promised you a review of *Robot Messiah* from the new software company, Alphabatim. Last month Christian Urquhart, Mike Baxter and Mike Smith all came to Ludlow to let us have a sneak preview of the game in which you play the role of the Robot Messiah who needs your help in his quest to liberate his fellows.

Sadly, the game wasn't quite finished enough for us to do a full review this issue — so as a consolation for breaking our bijou promisette, the minion from the Grovelling Department of CRASH Towers is pleased to be able to present this little competition in association with Saga Keyboards and Alphabatim.

No less than fifty elegant *Robot Messiah* T Shirts are up for grabs — one per winner, fools — which means that quite a few of you will not only be the envy of your friends in 1985 but also may well be considerably warmer.

BUT

and that was a big But, but the two top prize winners will also collect a Smashing SAGA Elite keyboard for their Spectrum to snuggle into in the cold winter months. Banish those rubber keyed blues forever with this elegant casing for your Spectrum. Normally the Elite keyboard would set you back 5pee less than eighty pounds — but to two of you, just this once, they go out at absolutely nothing. Free of charge. Not bad eh?

Now, you might think we'd expect you to do something incredibly difficult in order to stand a chance of winning prizes such as these, wouldn't you? Well, your 'umble Competition Minion is feeling generous — despite the fact that his workload has trebled what with the release of the new magazine for Amstrad users. It's really strange, you know, when I was just working on CRASH, organising competitions for you lot out there I had plenty of time to ponder what an ungrateful lot you were. Now I've barely got time for my three hour morning vat of tea break, let alone my mid afternoon snooze in the broom cupboard of CRASH TOWERS.

But I know you don't really care. Here I am, being forced to give away nice warm, comfy clothing to you rabble when I'm, shivering in my ancient, threadbare cardy. Winter's drawing near, and my minionly mingers are going to be blue again as I open your competition entries I fear."What happened to the jumper fund?", some of you might bother to ask, "how come you're still shivering?".

I'll tell you. All twenty three pee of it was nicked by a very thirsty Lloyd Mangram who squandered it at the local shop on three teabags, a cup of milk and a plastic teaspoon. Perhaps I could nick his Hermes typewriter and swop it with the nice lady in the woolshop for a new jumper while you get on with this wordsquare. Hmm.

ROBOT MESSIAH WORDSEARCH

Find the following words in the square below to stand a chance of winning some super clothing for you or you Spectrum:

ALPHABATIM MESSIAH OPPRESSORS NASTIES
SAGA ROBOT MINES DROIDS
KEYBOARD ELITE CAVES ACID
DUST

N	E	B	W	H	A	I	S	S	E	M	S	A
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NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

SHIRT SIZE

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY

Producer: Artic
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Donald Campbell**

For those of you who were wondering if there were andy sports left for software houses to simulate, the answer's is clearly, YES. The latest offering for armchair sportspersons is *International Rugby* from Artic.

The scenario places you among the world's finest rugby teams, trying to win your way through to the championships. The teams playing are England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France, and you can choose which team you want to control at the start. If you choose to be one of the Home International teams, England, Scotland , Ireland or Wales, then you can have a go at the Triple Crown, and try to defeat the other three home teams. Alternatively, you can choose to go for the Grand Slam, by thoroughly defeating all the other contestants.

The game can be played in two ways: practice or contest. Both modes can be played with either one or two players taking part. Practice allows a one off game to be played with either the computer or another human as an opponent. The competition mode sets up a sort of league with the five different teams taking part, up to two can be controlled by humans, with the computer controlling the rest of the teams in the league. As you play through the different games the computer presents a table at the end of each game, giving details on games won, games lost, games played and other such statistical information.

When it actually comes to playing, the field is represented in a semi 3D perspective. The rugby ball stays central while the screen scrolls around it. You can only control one player at a time and control is automatically switched to the player nearest the ball. The player you can control is highlighted by the computer to keep things easy.

A number of moves are available to the player you are controlling. Passing is effected with the fire button. To tackle and gain possession of the ball from the other team you've got to run past the man in possession from the back. Score a try by placing the ball over the touchline, and a kick is awarded. The kick is actually taken on a small screen which shows a front view of the posts and stadium lights up in the top right hand corner. Two arrows show the direction of the wind and you position a cross which marks the path the ball will take once the kick has been taken. You'll have to take the wind into account if you are to convert the try . . . .

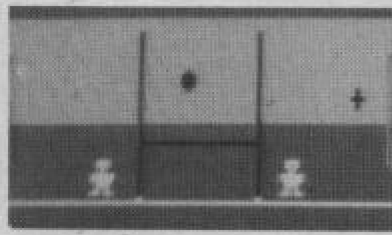
When two people are playing against each other at the same time, two sets of keys are provided on the keyboard, though things may get a bit cramped and there might be a bit of a real-life scrum on the keyboard!

CRITICISM

● **'Not really my scene, these sports simulations.** Interna tional Rugby **pleasantly surpri sed me, however, by being quite playable. The graphics are crude and move rather dodgily and the scrolling can not really be termed as unflickery either — but the game's just got something that makes it playable. A minor moan was the difficulty levels — when you first start the easy level proves too easy and the hard level is way too hard. But after four or five games acclimatisation, things fall into place a lot easier. Though not being a mega slick, well presented release, I quite enjoyed** International Rugby **and I can see it appealing to others.'**

● *'I must admit to being a bit of a sports fanatic so when* International Rugby *came you can imagine my excitement. So I rushed of to my computer and immediately loaded it. Fantastic loading screen, I thought. When loaded, the presentation was very pleasing so I went straight in to the championships. The game itself was a bit of a let down: all I had to do was a few 'Solo one' efforts down the wing and I was thrashing them 21-0. The game was too slow and the scrum looked like a line out in the middle of the field. It doesn't obey championship rules either — there was no 22 yard dropout when the opposition missed their conversion attempt. Overall a bit disappointing for rugby fans I think, though I hope other companies will have an attempt at this sort of game.'*

● 'As an ex rugby player (two manky kneecaps are constant reminders of being at the bottom of a scrum too many times) I really hoped that this was to be something special. Unfortunately it's nothing **extra** special but is still great fun to play. Not all the rules of rugby apply in this game — but then it would be next to impossible to produce a *Matchday* quality rugby game! Naturally attribute problems do hinder play somewhat, but if you are after a rugby game on the Spectrum then give this one a bash — it's great!'



COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/Q up,down S/A left,right and bottom row pass or kick.
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive enough to play
Use of colour: colour clash abounds
Graphics: a bit ancient stylistically, but sufficient
Sound: adequate

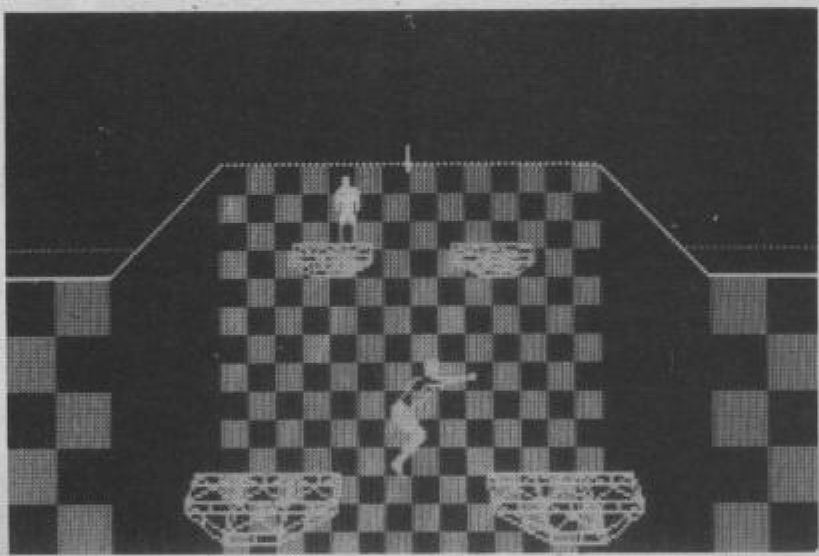
Better than getting muddy — why not play INTERNATIONAL RUGBY, the simulation of the rough, tough (and muddy) real thing. Wear a hooped shirt while you play for added realism



Skill levels: 2
Screens: 1
General rating: Though a bit crude still quite enjoyable

Use of computer	60%
Graphics	59%
Playability	71%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	66%
Overall	**67%**

DISCS OF DEATH



Spin the disc at your opponent in Artic's DISCS OF DEATH, and all the while you have to try to avoid your opponent's discs which are spun at you. Three platforms for you to dodge between and the pace is fast and furious

Producer: Artic
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Ian Rich**

Touring the arcades a few years ago was an arcade game of the name, *Discs of Tron. Discs of Death* is a version of the highly popular arcade game. Based upon the disc fighting sequence in the film Tron the idea is to topple an opponent off the platform he's standing on while evading his attempts at toppling you.

The two competitors face each other across a bottomless pit and hurl discs at one another. Each competitor has a row of three platforms and can jump from platform to platform to avoid being hit by his opponent's missile. Each player has three discs to hurl across the void, and they work rather like boomerangs,coming back to the sender if they don't hit.

You view the arena from behind the player you control, looking across the perspective view and aiming your discs with a cursor that moves left and right on the wall behind your opponent. When you release a disc it homes in on the cursor and either hits the enemy, in which case he dissolves into oblivion, or it comes snaking back to you hand automatically. You disc can score a hiton its way to the back wall or after it has rebounded and started for home.

The three platforms you can leap between to avoid your opponent's discs hover automatically above the perilous drop —but fortunately the program is kind enough to save you the worry of timing jumps between platforms carefully. You can't fall off!You can shuffle left and right on the platforms and when you get too close to the edge you leap nimbly and automatically across the gap if there's another platform in the direction you're moving.

If the opposing fighter lets lose a stream of discs heading directly for you, it's possible to avoid death by using your shields. They are limited in supply, but very useful as while they're activated all your opponent's disks will bounce harm lessly off you.

As you tot up a pile of corpses, you find successive competitors are made of sterner stuff, and take more effort to vapourise. As the sheets progress the scenery changes as well: some screens contain two platforms instead of the normal three. Other hazards are introduced such as force fields, and there's no shortage of willing challengers, eager to meet you across the pit.

CRITICISM

● **'Even though this is an arcade clone, with all the hard work of design having already been done, leaving the programmer to copy what he's seen. Artic's copy isn't that good.The graphics are of a low standard and the animation of the man walking across the platform makes him look he's shuffling rather than bounding athletically across the platform. The movement of the discs themselves, as they fly across the arena isn't bad but they do tend to flicker a little bit. Really not a very impressive or outstanding game in the final analysis. And at the price, worth a miss.'**

● *'This game is of a lower quality than most budget software. The blocky graphics may have been passable a couple of years agobut they look very poor compared to today's standards. Sound is fairly well used, although the 'tune' or whatever the noise on the title screen should be called, is exceedingly infuriating as you can't turn it off. Gameplay is monotonous and unvaried and it wasn't long before I was bored with it. Generally, I wouldn't recommend this one, as it is very primitive and not at all compelling.'*

● 'There aren't many games of this type on the Spectrum and as far as this one goes it is quite playable. The graphics are crude and tend to flicker a lot, which lets the game down terribly. The biggest problem with the game is that there is a distinct lack of variation. This makes it unaddictive and after a while quite boring. I'm sure Artic can turn out better stuff than this. Onthe whole it is a bit of a let down but it may appeal to some.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursor keys
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: slow and difficult
Use of colour: clash and gory
Graphics: undetailed and very jerky
Sound: almost non existent
Skill levels: 3
Screens:
General rating: Tired old arcade clone that's far too late

Use of computer	34%
Graphics	30%
Playability	30%
Getting started	38%
Addictive qualities	29%
Value for money	35%
Overall	**31%**

HACK, HACK, HACKETTY

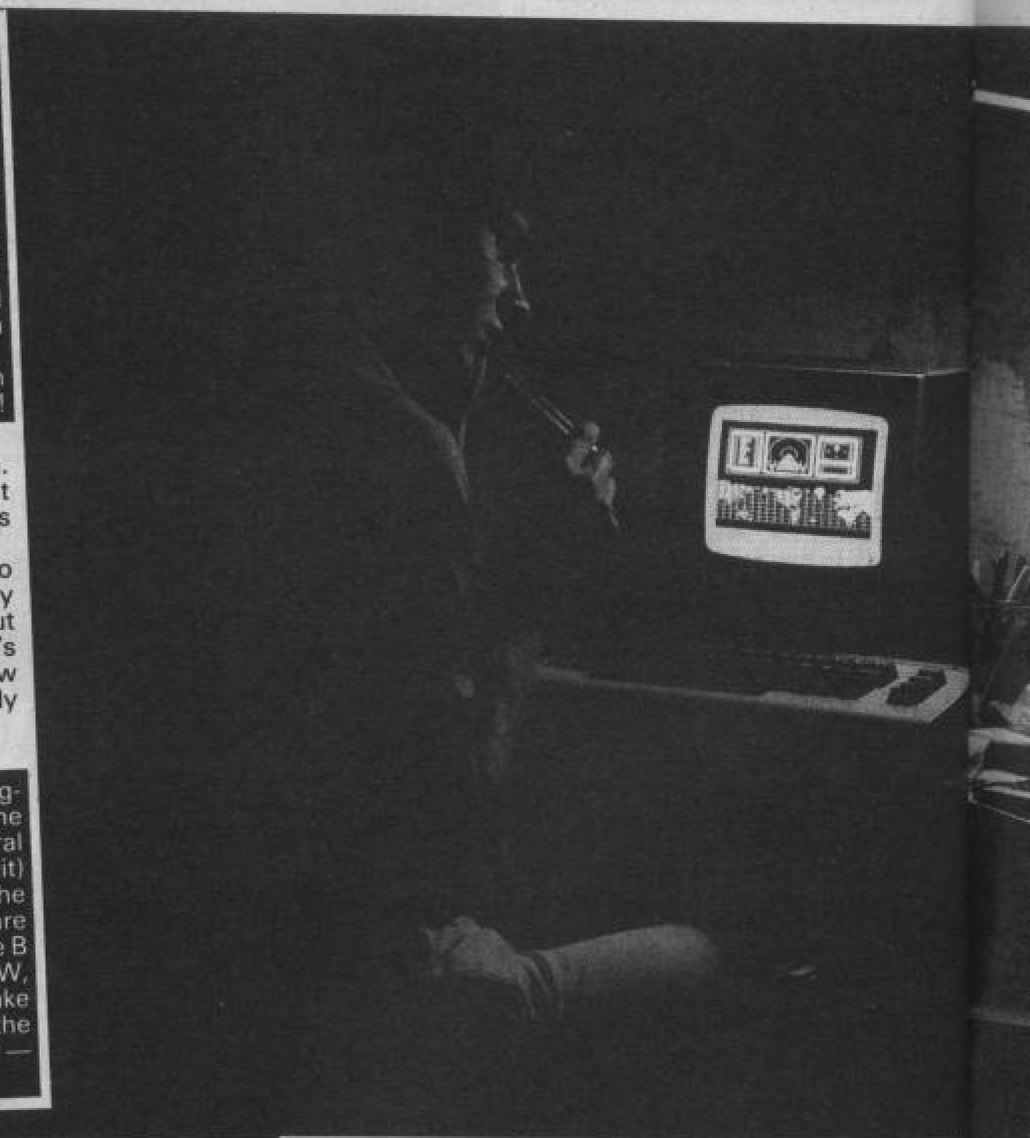
Join in the fun without upping your phone bill!

50 copies of the Hacking Gm for Grabs

When it comes down to it, hacking can get to be a really expensive hobby. Apart from the fines that the odd court appearance can clock up, there's the cost of all those expensive modems, not to mention the telephone time. Five point whatsit pee per unit, including VAT, as Fearsome Franco, Newsfield Financial Guru keeps reminding us. Just because British Telecom's been privatised it doesn't mean that shareholders can get a cheap hack together. Certainly not — you pays the same amount of loot for telephone time whether you're a shareholder or not.

The chaps and chapesses at **Activision** have come up with quite a neat idea, all things considered. A game called *Hacker* in which you get to hack — but without all those tedious bills. You also stand absolutely zero chance of being arrested. (No-one makes a film about you, either . . .)

In *Hacker* the game, you stumble upon a computer system which you can't resist exploring . . . once you crack in, the rest is up to you!



Activision have sponsored this CRASH Competition just for fun. You can win a copy of *Hacker*the game, which means you might never need to bother with a modem and the risk of large phone bills ever again.

"Apply your mind", my Great Auntie Minionette always used to say, "and you're bound to succeed." I could never understand why anyone, other than a beakless budgie, should wish to suck seed, but then I WAS only five at the time. I think I understand Auntie's philosophy better nowadays, but this is all fairly irrelevant. I know you're just champing at the bit, dying to find out how to enter, apply your minds and suck seeds, so here goes:

Art Supremo OLIVER FREY, has put together this bijou drawingette for your delectation. As you can see, it's a typical scene from the life of an addicted bulletin board accesser, hacker and general modem user. The dregs of coffee lurk in cup, the ashtray (filthy habit) overfloweth — and the computer is on. The modem is active and the computer is straining at the leash . . . trouble is, the two scenes are slightly different. Spot the differences, ring them round on picture B and whizz your entry into CRASH HACK, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB to reach us by 30th December. Please make sure you include the word CRASH on the entry address to make the life of your competition-setting and post-sorting minion easier — thank you!



Name ....

Address ....

....

.... Postcode ....

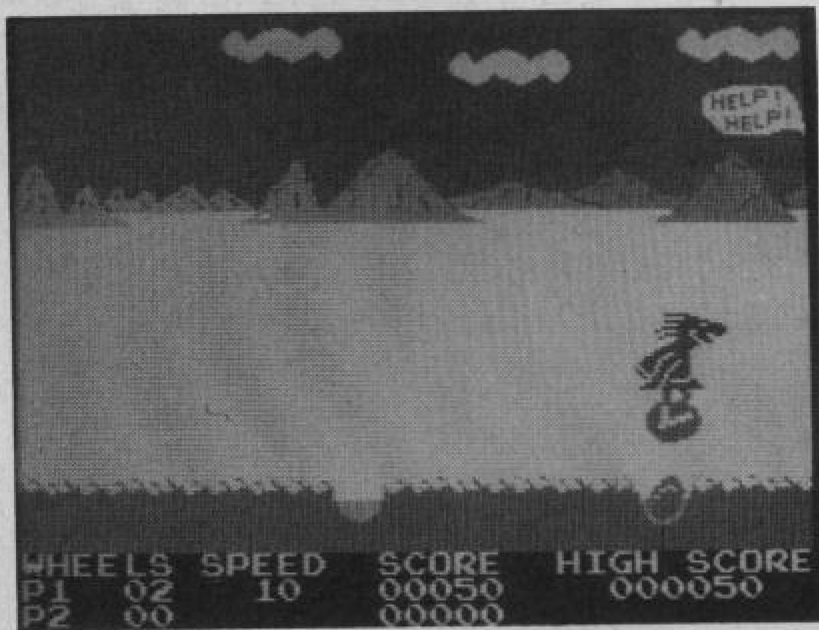




Reviews

BC'S QUEST FOR TYRES

Producer: Software Projects
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Michael Davies**



Trundle, trundle, trundle goes Thor on his motorised transport in BC's QUEST FOR TIRES, the latest offering from Software Projects. Pity there's no Cute Chicks in CRASH Towers — they're dragons to a woman in Mail Order

BC's Quest for Tyres is set way back during the stoneage and puts you in a sexist 'rescue the girl from the baddy' situation. You play Thor, a caveman type whose girl 'Cute Chick' is being held captive by the Hungry Dinosaur. You've got to get on your stone monocycle (must be flipping painful) and trundle your way across the hazardous neanderthal landscape to get her back.

The game is similar to *Hunchback*, but constantly scrolls rather than flicks from screen to screen. When you start, the game is pretty simple — there are a few potholes and boulders on the road which have to be jumped. Soon you get to the forest and low hanging branches have to be ducked under and sticks on the ground have to be jumped over. Needless to say if you happen to hit any obstacle you come tumbling off the granite unicycle, hit the dust and see a few stars. Crashes also cost a life, and you start off with four.

After the first forest you have to cross a river by jumping across the backs of four swimming turtles, using them as stepping stones. Being of a lazy disposition, the turtles are constantly submerging. Getting your timing right is critical, otherwise you could find yourself pretty much in deep water and end up with one life less. Just in case you find bouncing across the turtles too easy, Fat Broad sits on the other side of the river and waves her club about. If her club is down when you reach the bank then you'll fall back into the water. "Jump sucker" she keeps urging you in a speech bubble.

After that little escapade comes a steep uphill climb. Rocks bouncing down the slope and potholes make the going pretty tough. and it gets tougher on the way down, with low flying boulders from a volcano adding injuries to insult. As you trundle along a bird flies down — this is yer actual friendly Dooky Bird, who's prepared to carry you across the gaping lava pit if you can jump into its talons at the right moment.

Another hill, this time with a crevasse at the bottom, and another river crossing to make with the Hungry Dinosaur standing guard instead of Fat Broad, then it's into the dinosaur's cave. Jump and duck under the stalactites to complete this last run, then you get to your babes, Cute Chick, and live happily ever after . . . For at least ten seconds, anyway, whereupon the silly girl is stupid enough to let herself be captured by the Hungry Dinosaur, and the whole problem starts over again.

Points are awarded for jumping over or ducking each obstacle, and double, treble and quadruple points can be earned by pelting along at high speeds. Thor's unicycle must be motorised — it can do up to 80 mph, with the speed shown on a digital speedometer at the bottom of the screen. You can accelerate if you want to go for points, or slow down a bit on the trickier sections if you wish. Fortunately, in neanderthal days, fuel wasn't a problem . . .

CRITICISM

● **'Software Projects have done a good job of converting this one from the Commodore and BC is still a pretty loveable character. I loved the way he bounces and bumps over all the obstacles in his path. The stages that you encounter are not too long and I felt that I'd have a better chance of completing them next go . . . which helped get me addicted. Technically the graphics are quite clever, if a little uninspiring. Quite a challenging game to start, but could get repetitive quickly.'**

● *'I first saw this game months ago on the Commodore and then it struck me as being pretty abysmal. The Spectrum version is a reasonably good conversion — just as bad as the 64 version. The graphics are pretty bad, but the scrolling, it must be said, is very good. The one good point about the game is that it is very easy to play, although this does knock down the addictive qualities. Overall it's very poor and I hope Software Projects have more luck with Willy Meets the Taxman.'*

● 'What a strange game. At first this game seems very poor, and it's almost as if it hasn't been finished: there's no sound, for instance bar a ticking noise. It's hard to describe what's missing . . . After a few goes, however, the game began to grow on me and I was really getting into it after an hour — until I discovered that it's not as hard as it should be. Graphically this game isn't outstanding, although I did like the way the mountains move more slowly than the ground and sky. A lot of attribute problems mar what neatness the graphics have.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: W forwards, Q pull back, K jump, M duck, ENTER and W speed up, ENTER and Q slow down
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: lots of attribute problems, not attractive
Graphics: clever scrolling driving big, but flat graphics
Sound: not a lot, continuous rasping
Skill levels: gets harder as you progress
Screens: scrolling
General rating: Poor conversion of an already poor game

Use of computer	66%
Graphics	51%
Playability	55%
Getting started	64%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	44%
Overall	46%

MORE WHEEEEE, SPLAT (GENTLY)

An update on how the CRASH/ZZAP!/AMTIX! Dr Barnardo and Action Group charity parachute jump is going, as the clock ticks away the seconds to takeoff time for some hapless Newsfield Nutters. . . .

Now that the votes are beginning to come in there is an air of panic circulating through the Towers. At the top of the jump league table is our very own lovable (almost), affable (rarely) and helpful (never), Denise the Subscription Queen. This unenviable position is due to one man, who shall remain nameless though readers of CTW may know to whom we refer. As an **Incentive** to the rest of you the anonymous donor has promised to keep sending in the loot to keep Denise at the top of the list. That could cost him a lot of money. Denise is trying to establish exactly what it is that he wants to make him renege on his promise.

Another high flyer is ZZAP's very own mini hero Julian Rignall. So far the voters have placed him firmly on the tarmac, if not actually in the aircraft itself. A couple of readers offered extra loot if Rignall would make the jump without the aid of a chute — he's giving the idea some thought.

In the meantime the software industry is beginning to put up goodies for the voters to win — we'll publish a list of the prizes on offer in future issues.

Dr. Barnardo's, who have a reputation as the world's largest family, are jubilant about being on the receiving end of your generosity. Since the 1870 the organisation has been helping and caring for children who have either been orphaned or who are disadvantaged in other ways. Nowadays Barnardo's are involved in a wide range of activities. Apart from running childrens' homes Barnardo's provide help and advice for the parents of handicapped children as well as day care centres, fostering and adoption services and education for children who need help to overcome a wide range of problems. Barnardo's pointed out that they are also heavily reliant on the use of electronic aids in their projects. The more common applications for computers are as communication aids, alarm systems and in computerised wheel chairs. Not surprisingly, some of Dr Barnardo's children are computer games addicts as well.

Last year Dr Barnardo's helped over 9,000 children. With your help they could help even more next year. If all of our readers responded with just one pound then



Barnardo's and the Action group could benefit by £100,000. Don't be mean — send in your loot! Besides the invaluable help that you will be giving the two charities, don't forget you stand a good chance of winning one of the many prizes on offer. And you could have the satisfaction of knowing that you've put one of the Newsfield Nutters in a very awkward position — 2000 feet above the ground . . .

I want . . . . to jump out of a very high flying Hercules (He or she may use a parachute at his or her discretion)

I enclose a donation of £ . . . . (minimum of £1.00) and no coins, please. We get charged for receiving them.

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THE COMPETITIONY BIT

Name three flight simulation games

(1) . . . .

(2) . . . .

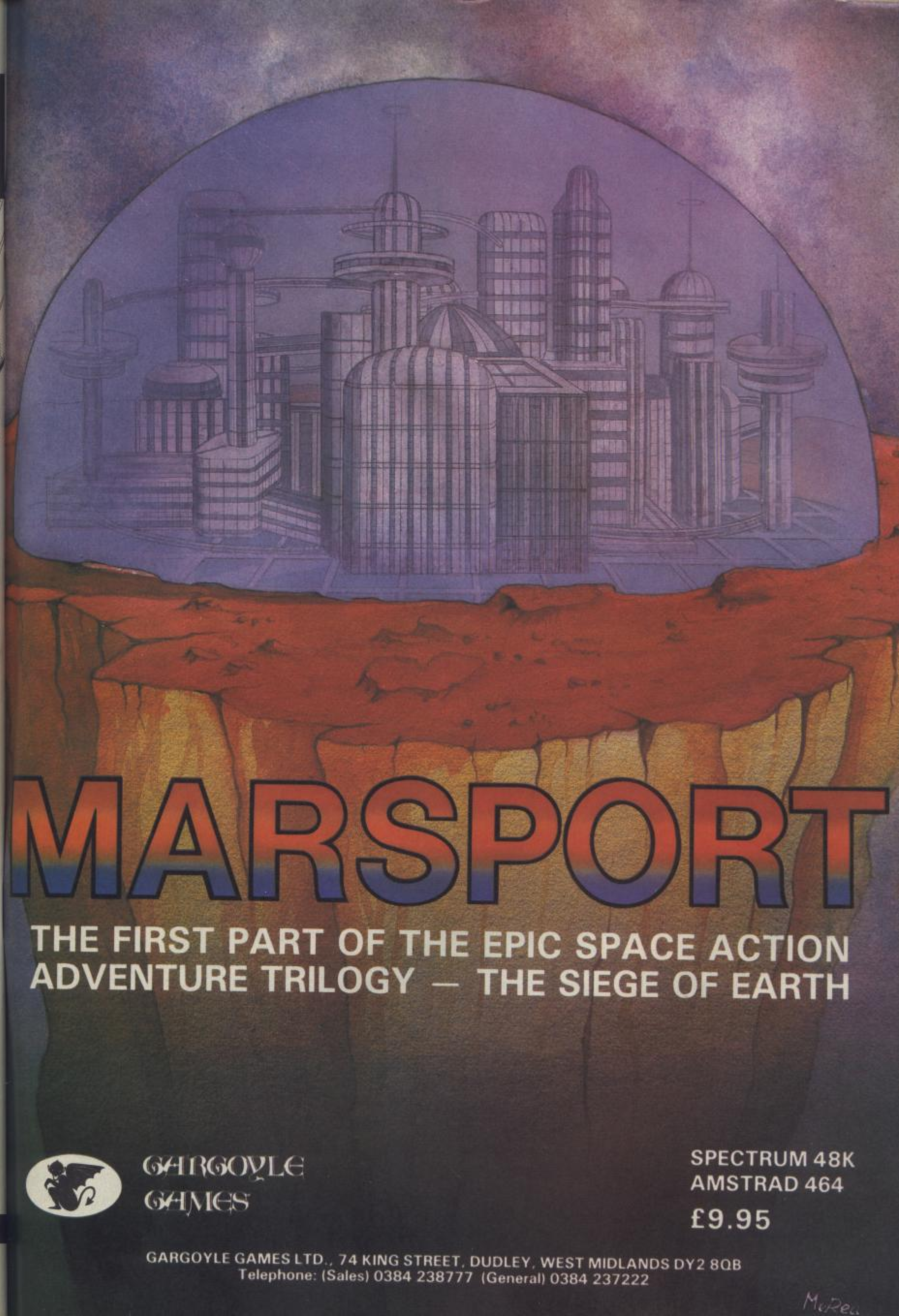
(3) . . . .

In fifteen words or less, using your skill, judgement and a pen complete the phrase below in the most apt and original way . . . .

I WANT SEAN MASTERSON TO JUMP BECAUSE

. . . .

STOP PRESS! Oli offers original cover painting as a prize for the voters in the Loony Leap Charity Competition!


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Spectrum Shops and all good software dealers. Trade enquiries welcome.

PREVIEW

INTO THE CATACOMBS OF ZOB

It's been a long wait for SWORDS AND SORCERY. A very long wait indeed . . . But a little while ago, Graeme Kidd was lured to the labyrinthe wherein PPS may be found, and, ascending a treacherously steep and narrow flight of stairs, he came upon Mike Simpson — the programming wizard who has been casting a spell on the Spectrum.

MIKE SIMPSON has been working on his dungeon-based role playing game for the Spectrum for over eighteen months now. At last, it is virtually complete — delayed by the fact that he is a perfectionist. A person who is not prepared to compromise. Mike decided what he wanted to achieve — a role playing game which allowed you, the player, to approach it in a number of different ways and interact with it accordingly — and wasn't prepared to deviate from his objective, despite the Spectrum's limitations.

There were times during the coding when it looked like some part of the original design might have to be scrapped owing to lack of space in memory or program execution constraints. Mike wouldn't accept this, and each time a problem was encountered he went back and re-wrote or fine tuned the routines so now the code which lies behind the game is nearly as efficient as it could possibly be. And Mike is a happy man.

The product of this extended period of work, *Swords and Sorcery* is an impressive piece of software indeed, and very different from anything else currently available on the Spectrum. And while *Swords* is a stand-alone game, the months of development work that went into it also produced the MIDAS adventure system — which will be used to write other games and expansion modules for *Swords* itself.

It is very difficult to do this game justice in few words — the concept that lies behind it, the way in which it works and the sheer size and depth of the game itself defy labelling. The closest one can get is "a sort of Dungeons and Dragons game, with the computer as referee".

You begin the game by naming your character, who then enters a system of linked rooms and corridors which form a dungeon of the sort familiar to role playing game enthusiasts. This underground network consists of four levels, each containing plenty of rooms and corridors about which the Master Armourer, Zob, scattered the pieces of a priceless suit of armour.

If you wish, you can go on a quest to find these pieces of armour, collect them together and become fabulously rich. Not a trivial task, this one, for Zob has filled the caverns with traps for the unwary — like hidden pits — and some fifty different kinds of monster are lurking, waiting to attack, wound and destroy foolhardy adventurers. The odds are not stacked entirely against you, however, for there is treasure to be found in the dungeons, weapons and magical items which will assist you in your dealings with the dungeon's denizens.

Quite how you approach your journey through the dungeon system is up to you. You begin with some fighting ability, a little magic in the form of a FIREBOLT spell and a helmet. Stumping round the corridors and entering rooms you'll come across monsters — which you can try talking to or fighting — and treasures which you can collect. As you go about your travels, you will gain experience, learn new spells, collect useful equipment and valuable items and your character's attributes will reflect your progress. If you wish, you can play a game in which you try to build up your character's magical powers . . . or you might wish to become an excellent fighter . . . or you might aim to be the roughest, toughest, fightingest magician . . . or . . . , well, it's up to you entirely!

There are four levels in the dungeon — and to gain access to the next level you will need to discover a way of opening the portal which seals it off from your character. Should you have the misfortune to die during the course of a session in the dungeons, don't despair. The game will not end. You are simply reincarnated. Sounds too simple? Well, yes it is. When you come back from the dead, you'll find that everything is just that little bit more difficult — the monsters will be meaner, the hidden pits deeper and the odds will be stacked just that little bit higher against you.

You can, however, save your character out to tape if you're in a tight corner and think you are about to be killed or severely damaged. If you've spent ages building him or her up, then you'll want to hang on to your little friend for use in other sessions at the keyboard with *Swords*. Alternatively, you may wish to take you character into another dungeon — PSS have promised new games and expansion modules, also written with the MIDAS system, which will contain new worlds into which you can load your saved character.



The game itself is menu driven and you interact with it via a set of linked menus displayed at the bottom of the screen. Using three keys for menu left, menu right and menu select, you begin at the main menu and select an option from HIT, MAGIC, HANDLE, ACT, TALK and USE. Selecting HIT lets you choose your attack and defence moves for combat, and starts a scrap if there's a monster in front of you. MAGIC gives you access to the list of spells you have at your disposal, and you cast a spell by selecting it from the sub-menu. (There are nearly twenty spells available in the dungeons — why not collect them all?)

HANDLE and ACT present you with extensive sub menus concerned with handling objects you are carrying and which you see in front of you, and doing things to or with them — like opening chests and eating food. TALK allows you to communicate with monsters — and can lead to some fascinating conversations with the meanies, as the sentences spoken by both parties are randomly generated from an immense vocabulary and displayed on the central communication scroll. You can never be sure how a monster will react, either . . . . Finally, the USE option can release the magical properties of some items.

As you travel round the dungeon — using three keys: left, right and forwards — your position is shown on a plan of the dungeon displayed at the top of the screen while your view of the corridor or room is shown in a 3D window which moves around, changing according to your character's viewpoint.

A complete Monsterology of *Swords and Sorcery* would not fit in the space allotted here, but each beast has particular strengths and attributes, from the ability to cast spells, fight in hand to hand combat or deal out some speciality like turning you into stone, freezing you with a blast of icy breath or poisoning you.

The game will come with a complete run down on the monsters lurking in the dungeon system, a few hints on how to fight and survive in the caverns and a description of the spells and treasures that can be found. Hours of fun to be had . . . once you've played *Swords and Sorcery* for a while, you'll realise it was well worth the wait!

ONE MAN AND HIS DROID

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Clive Brooker**

You've been sent off to the planet Anromadus to round up members of a species of alien animal named ramboids and teleport them to market. Despite the name, ramboids are not Sylvester Stallone look alikes, but are the Anromadian equivalent of male sheep — hence the name ramboids. Technologically things have moved on quite a bit since the days when a shepherd's only friend was his dog. The modern shepherd has traded in Shep and got himself a droid, a multi functioning device specially designed for the job. Capable of four different modes of operation the droid is used to guide the ramboids into the teleport chamber.

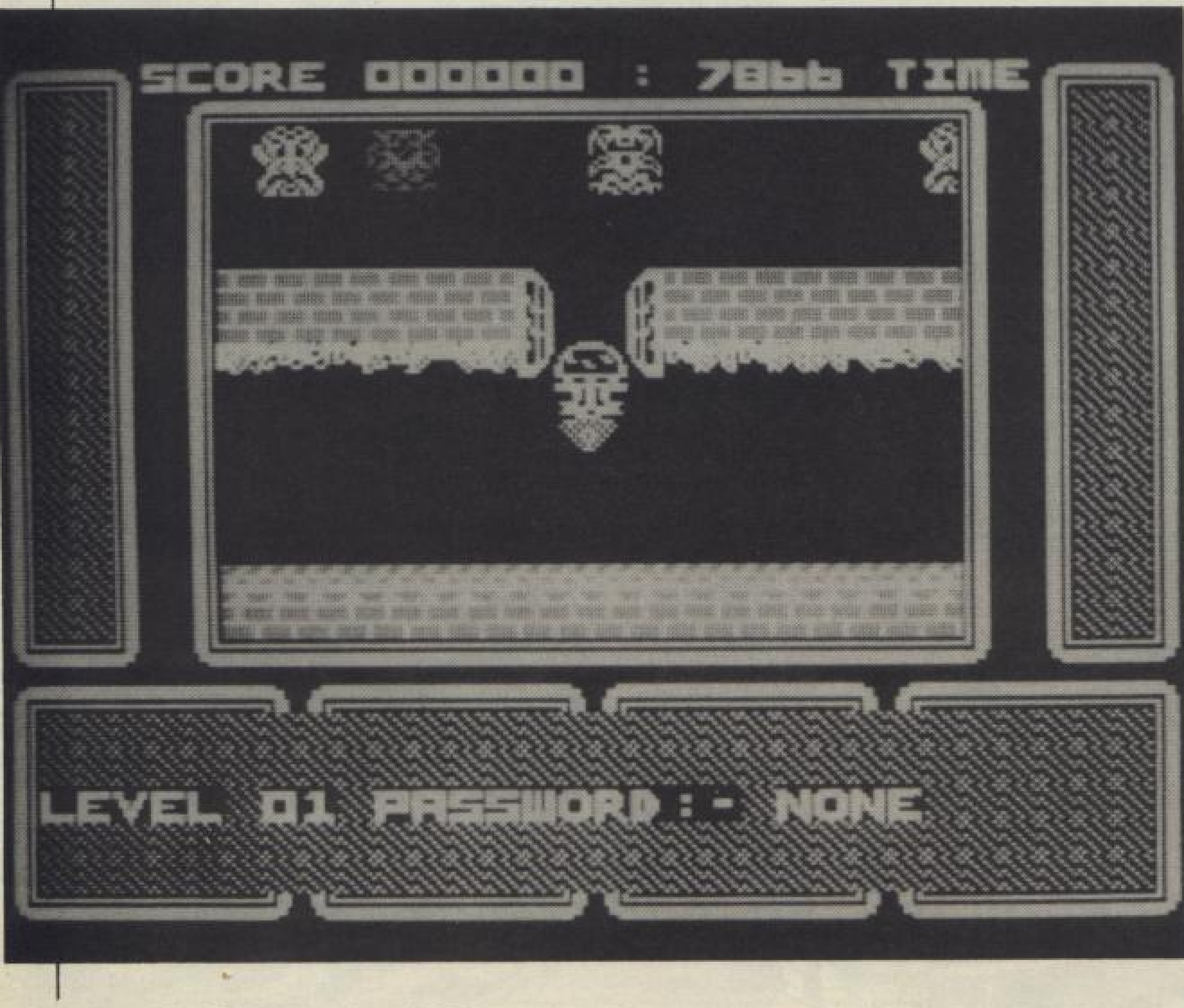
When you start the game you are given the option of inputting a password in order to resume a game you were playing earlier, otherwise you start at the beginning. There are passwords for each of the twenty different ramboid-filled caverns, and as you progress through each cavern, the computer releases the corresponding password to you.

At the start of a game the screen is split up into seven different windows. Largest and centrally placed is the main window which looks into a cavern, displaying a view of your droid placed centrally amongst the scenery. Your first task is to guide the droid to the start position. When you arrive at the start the computer takes over and places the droid in the first cavern.

Once into the first cavern, the other six windows activate. A narrow, vertical window to the left of the main screen randomly shuffles eight different ramboids within itself to set the collection sequence, which is the order in which you have to get the ramboids into the teleport. A window on the right of the main screen charts your progress, indicating the ramboids you've penned so far with those herded into the correct place in the sequence flashing.

The four remaining windows, arranged horizontally below the main viewing window display the four modes in which the droid can be operated. The mode the droid is currently in is highlighted by a white bar above the relevant icon. The most useful mode of transport is jet mode: using the jet it's possible to zoom about in the normal, left, right, up and down directions. The droid stays central while the bricks and earth of the cavern whizz by in the main window display. Burrow is the second mode: the droid can move left and right along ledges and will burrow into the floor while fire is held down, popping up again leaving the floor intact when it's released. The third utility mode allows the droid to alter the cavern by digging tunnels. If the droid walks into a wall while it is in this mode, a large portion of the barrier is eaten away and the floor and ceiling of the newly formed alcove is supported with purple girders. To switch between the different modes, press fire; holding fire down reveals a map displaying the positions of all the ramboids left to be collected.

Ramboids are dim. They move very predictably, and will always reverse their direction of movement if their way is blocked. Once you know this, and watch the set patterns of movement herding them is relatively simple — but they are delicate creatures which only live for about twenty minutes. You are working against the clock all the time. Should you fail to get at least four ramboids in the teleport in the right order within the time, it's back to the first screen.



CRITICISM

● **'The game idea for this one actually contains elements of originality! An quality rarely found even in full priced mega releases. The game idea is rather neat, and is fun to play showing little derivation from any other known piece of software. Graphically** One Man and his Droid **is also very good — the scrolling in the main window is impressive. The droid itself is a little ill-defined, I felt, but overall the standard is quite high, especially for Mastertronic. I must admit to being favourably impressed to this release: it provided far more than £1.99's worth of entertainment for the time I played. The only slightly marring feature was the fact you can't restart once you've started a twenty minute ramboid rounding up session.'**

● *'Have you ever fancied yourself as an intergalactic sheep farmer? Well, if you have you're bound to find this game pretty useful. Essentially, it's a maze game but with a few good, new ideas added. The game takes a bit of getting used to, and careful reading of the instructions is vital but once you're up and running it's definitely fun and a bit of a brain teaser. Maze-lovers shouldn't miss this game — and at £2.00 it's difficult for anyone to go wrong.'*

● 'This is a game with very nicely drawn and animated graphics and quite a few neat little touches. It's a sort of arcade/strategy game which can be quite absorbing. For the price, considering the level of finish, it's a good deal. Well worth a second look, unlike quite a few games on the market at three or four times the price.'

COMMENTS

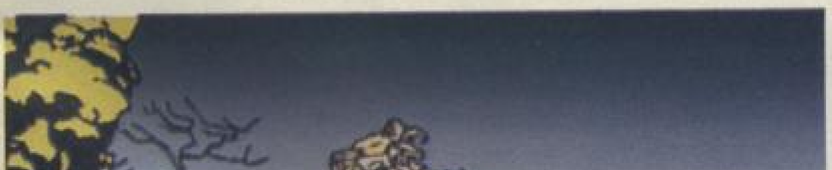
Control keys: A to ENTER down, Q to P up, 1 to 5 fire
Joystick: Kempston or Interface 2
Keyboard play: a little awkward, but responsive enough
Use of colour: very neat
Graphics: thoughtfully done, attractive
Sound: spot effects and constant clicking, which can annoy
Skill levels: progressive
Screens: 20 cavern systems
General rating: a neat product, especially at the price

Use of computer	**78%**
Graphics	**77%**
Playability	**73%**
Getting started	**69%**
Addictive qualities	**71%**
Value for money	**85%**
Overall	**76%**



A variation on the Extra-Ram for your BBC computer joke, courtesy of Spaceward Ltd.

IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS



Black and white frame grab (put into memory from a video camera) of a linocut which was then coloured using PLUTO's Designer Software

computer graphics techniques have improved dramatically, partly owing to advances in hardware and party owing to improvements in software design. But the most significant development in the past half-decade has been a dramatic increase in the amount of computer graphics capability your money can buy.

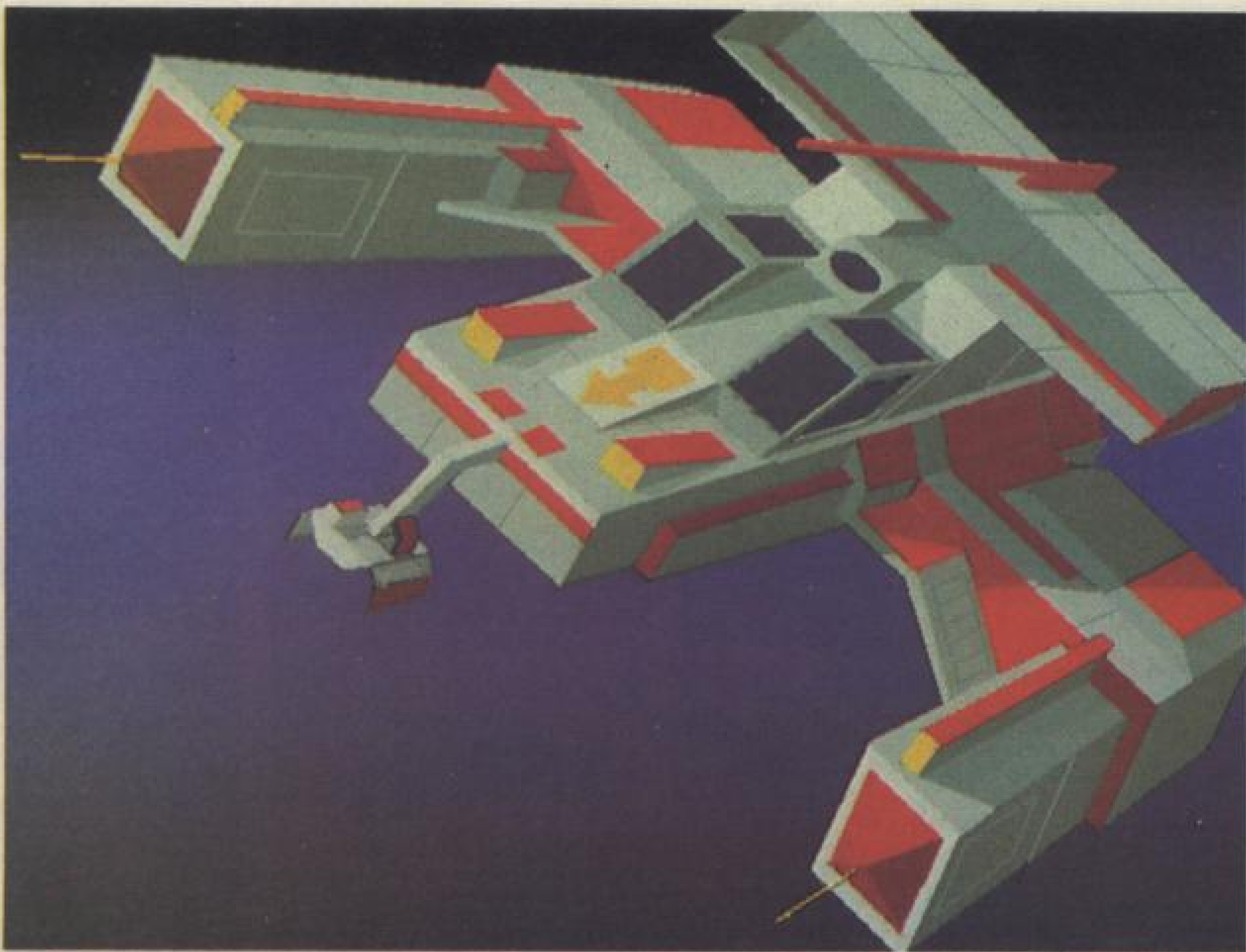
Perhaps the Spectrum at the very bottom end of the market. Nevertheless, running software such as *The Artist*, some quite spectacular effects may be created on the screen for what amounts to peanuts, pricewise. At the top of the range is a system involving Cray computers capable of creating complete, incredibly detailed animated sequences which can be used in feature films. You can be talking in terms of 8.5 **trillion** calculations to produce one second of animation at this level, though . . . all a bit much for the Z80 processor!

But you don't have to have a budget with lots of zeros after the pound sign to become involved in computer graphics — a few thousand pounds will set you up very nicely with a system like that made by PLUTO GRAPHICS which can be driven with a BBC computer. And for less than twenty thousand pounds it's possible to acquire systems capable of producing sophisticated images suitable for professional video applications such as that used and sold by SPACEWARD.

The applications for computer graphics are many and varied — and the range is growing daily as the price of the equipment renders the application of such techniques viable for a wider range of organisations. A great deal of progress has been made in the field of graphic design and printing — it's now possible to produce an entire page of a magazine or newspaper on a VDU screen, adding text, headlines and pictures and then sending it to a machine which prepares the plates from which the finished page will be printed. Soon entire newspapers and magazines will be produced this way.

Computer graphics are being applied in business — to produce artwork for presentations, brochures and catalogues. Using image recorders, 35mm transpar-

PICTURES HELD IN RAM



Hand drawn picture input to the PLUTO system using the digitising tablet



A business-type graphic produced by the IMAGE BUREAU, a firm which specialises in such things. The aircraft are taken from a library of images held in their computer's memory

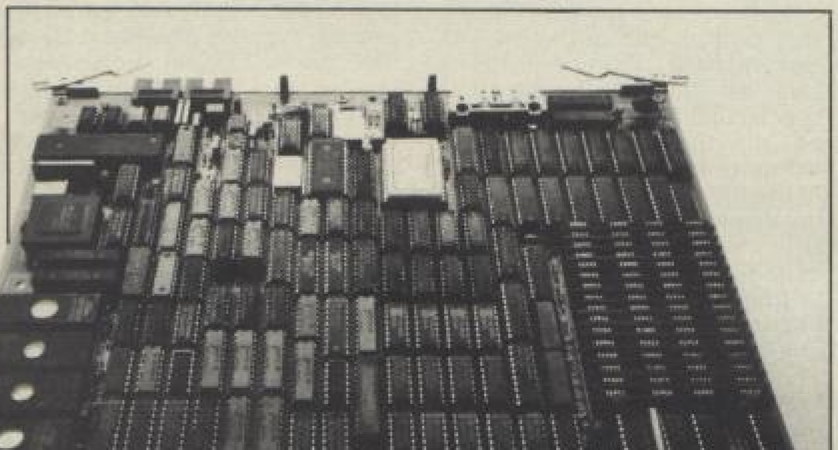
encies can be made from a computer generated image at such a high resolution (8,000 lines) that the finished result is as impressive as real artwork.

In the hands of an artist or illustrator, a computer graphics system can really come to life, allowing the artist to work with the medium in a way that is precluded by traditional techniques. Foreground, middleground and background elements of a picture can be held in memory and altered separately. A building drawn on and held in background memory, for instance can be enlarged, reduced and moved around using the most sophisticated systems, without affecting the rest of the picture.

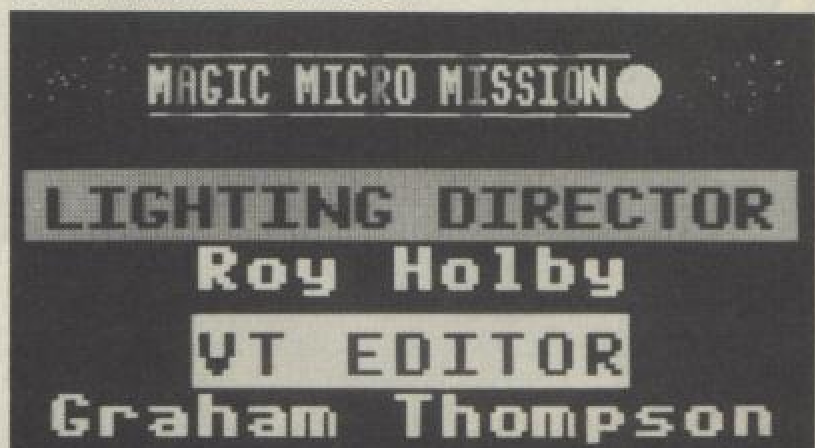
In industry, Computer Aided Design and Drafting techniques now assist in modelling stress in structures; and using kinematics, it's possible to simulate movement in an assembly held in the computer's memory as a representation of the solid object or device. A great deal of time and expense in development and testing of prototypes can be saved using such techniques. Drafting systems can produce blueprints and technical drawings about five times as fast as a human draftsman - and updates can be entered and the whole drawing re-output up to 25 times faster than it can be done manually. It is in the fields of video, film and television that computer graphics have had their most obvious impact, however. Not only are the budgets available for producing advertisements, films and television programs generally large enough to warrant the use of expensive equipment, but the end results are seen by a massive audience. Systems such as the QUANTEL PAINTBOX, which literally allow an artist to manipulate, draw and paint video images have been responsible for some very sophisticated video graphics. And techniques have now advanced to the stage where it is viable to shoot a film on video, edit it and then put the finished opus onto film for distribution on the traditional cinema circuit.

The story turns full circle however . . . the humble Spectrum has already been used to provide graphics for broadcast TV programs. Dave Beeson (this month's ON THE SCREEN artist) used his Spectrum to produce a graphic sequence for a program on hacking for Central ITV this year — and a couple of years ago, the end credits for Central's MAGIC MICRO MISSION were written on a 16K Spectrum by our very own TECH TIPS wiz, Simon Goodwin.

An example of the kind of chippery pokery involved in specialised graphics systems nowadays. There's probably enough to build half a dozen Spectrums and still leave change. . . .



Amazing what can be achieved with a 16K Spectrum using BASIC. This little sequence formed the end credits for Central ITV's THE MAGIC MICRO MISSION





Dragged back for another term, Eric continues his one-man fight against the Education system. All his old adversaries are there, plus escapees from the Biology room and, even worse, girls! Lucky he stocked up on stink bombs over the holidays!

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There's not that many people who've used a Spectrum to generate graphics for broadcast TV programs. DAVE BEESON, Graphic Designer for Central Independent TV has done just that. He's also used an Atari 800 to produce title credits for a computer program — *The Magic Micro Mission*. It just goes to show what you can do with a home computer if you put your mind to it. . . .

TEEVEE WIZARDRY

Dave Beeson began his artistic career by following a three year degree course in Graphic Design at Birmingham Polytechnic. During the course, students were supposed to specialise in either General Design or Illustration. Dave wanted to do both, and managed to convince the college to allow him to have his way.

A wise move on his part. When it came to the end of year show for final year students two talent scouts from the Birmingham based Independent TV station, ATV, saw Dave's work, realised he was an all-rounder and invited him for an interview. Mr Beeson got the job, and joined ATV's graphics department as an assistant. That was nearly seven years ago.

So what does working in the graphics department of a TV company involve? "I'm an all-rounder rather than a specialist", Dave explained, "as we all have to be. You never know what's coming through the door in this job: maybe it's cartoons that are wanted one day, a logo the next, with charts and maps needed for current affairs programs all the time. I love the variety — the job only gets boring when there's nothing to do." Which rather explains why Dave is happy to work in any medium, and doesn't have a particular specialism. "I can latch on to most techniques and copy styles fairly easily."

Which is just as well. When Central TV (as ATV became in the last round of franchise reshuffles) decided to produce a computer program it was logical to have a go at producing the title graphics on home micros. Dave had bought a Spectrum a few months before work started on *The Magic Micro Mission* at the end of 1983 and had been telling everyone in the Graphics Department how wonderful these home computers were. He was the obvious choice when it came to working on graphics for a program on home computers. . . .

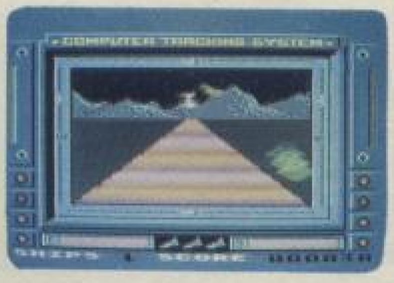


Dave Beeson, the man himself

"It was fun working with the people who wrote programs to run the graphics", Dave remembered, "I produced screen designs on the Atari using *Paintbox* and Simon Goodwin wrote the programs that moved them round. I was very pleased with

Scenes from the Title Credits of Central TV's MAGIC MICRO MISSION. Amazing what you can do with an Atari if you try.

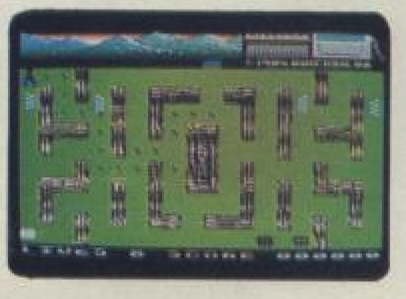
















First the little space shuttle flies round the Central TV globe logo, then the screen wipes to reveal the console of the ship flying over a scrolling road with alien nasties cycling round that are blasted by the on board cannon — the nasties are blurred a bit in our dynamic photo!

The next phase has the ship flying towards the computer in the mountains, again over a scrolling road, this time dodging pillars. The shot we have here is of a development screen, and doesn't include the scrolling road, the ship or the pillars. Sad, eh?

Once the approach run has been completed, the ship then flies into the screen of the computer perched on the hill, and then the sequence inside the works begins with chips scampering around inside the circuit board. The a cut to the MAGIC MICRO MISSION main logo follows, and the title sequence ends.

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* Note due to memory limitations ACE on the C16 and VIC20 (+8K Ram) do not have any ground objects.

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the end result."

More recently, a program made in Central's Nottingham studios on hacking required some short animated sequences to demonstrate classic hacking techniques. Out came Dave's trusty Spectrum, reams of graph paper and four days of sitting up till two or three in the morning later . . . the finished result was put on videotape and edited into the program.

But what of the more expensive, professional graphics computers — does the life of a TV Graphic Designer involve much work at the top end of the computer graphics range? "The problem is that the graphics budgets for most programs are not large enough for computers yet. The more expensive machines can cost up to £500 an hour to buy time on, and that could be the entire budget. We tend to rely on traditional techniques — although some programs, like News at Ten and the BBC's Nine O'clock News rely heavily on computer generated graphics."

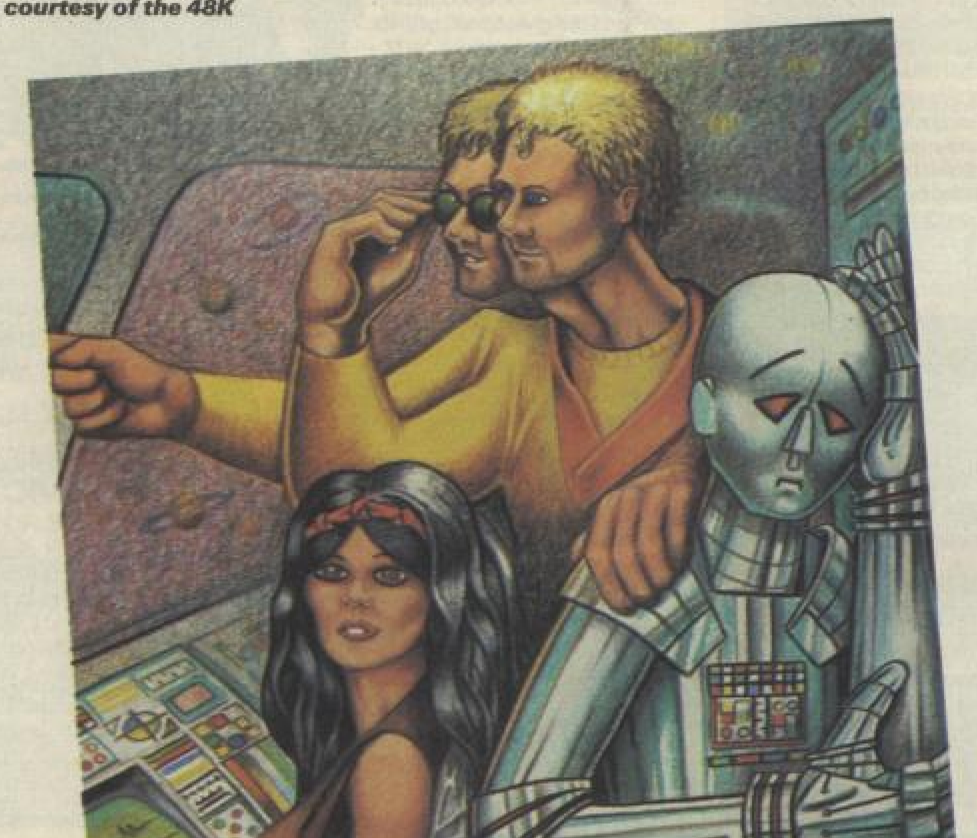
Dave's looking forward to the arrival of a Quantel Paintbox — a whizzo computer system used to create effects and produce graphics directly onto videotape — The Nine O'clock News graphics, for instance owe a lot to Quantel . . . "There'll be a bit of a scrabble to get time on The Quantel, once it arrives", Dave chuckled.

Apart from collecting Superman memorabilia — Dave's got jumpers, radios, hairbrushes, masks, pencil sharpeners, all sorts of things with Superman on them — house decorating is currently the main Beeson hobby. Dave's recently become a father and is decorating his family house, aided and abetted by his wife Roz who's a textile designer by trade.

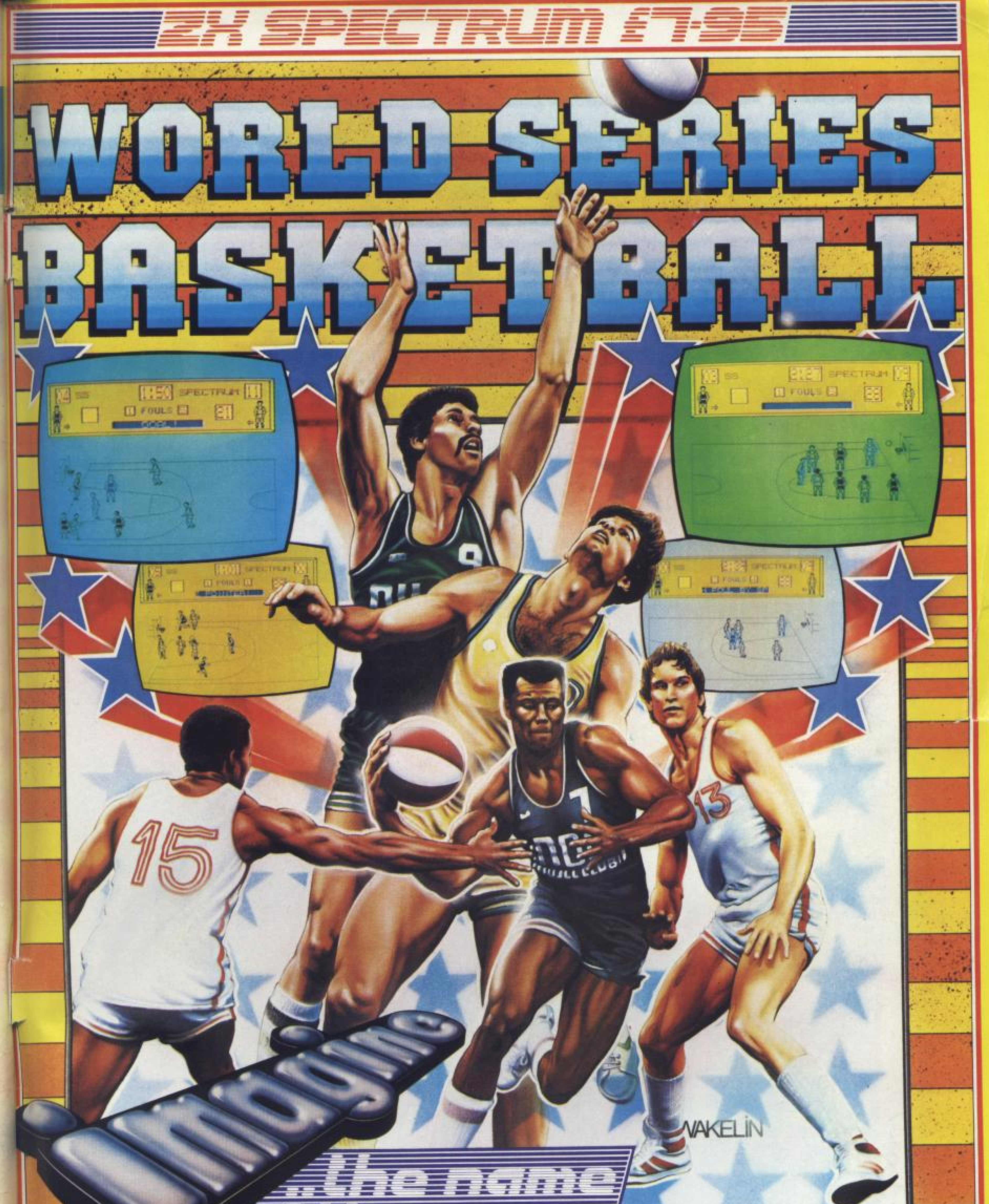
It's a while since he last did any freelance illustrating — work for a Polish magazine several years ago was the most recent Beeson freelance job. A little bit more freelance work may be in the pipeline soon, just to help keep the family finances flourishing! Meanwhile his schedule of work includes a stint on *The Price is Right* in July, four months on *Central News East* and two series: *Troubles and Strife* and *Parents and Teenagers*. Snooker fans will already have seen some Beeson graphics — the title sequence using the triangular grid . . .



The CITIZEN 85 GUIDE TO HACKING, courtesy of the 48K Spectrum



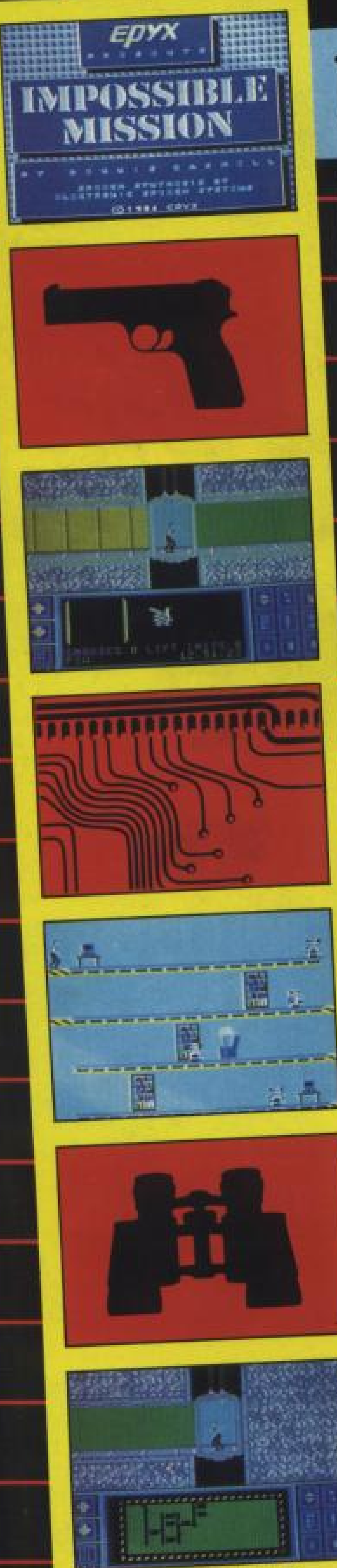
A piece of Vintage Beeson. Freelance work done for a Polish magazine to accompany a translation of Douglas Adams's HITCH HIKER's GUIDE TO THE GALAXY


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